SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 526. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 28TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

Obstinate Indigestion:

Its unpleasant Symptoms, with Illustrations of Cures in chronic and long-standing cases.

You awake in the morning more tired than when you went to bed, with an unpleasant taste in the Mouth, and the Tongue coated and dry. You have no Appetite for Breakfast—even the little food that is taken produces general discomfort, with pain and distension.

During the morning a faint sensation is experienced at the pit of the Stomach. There is a dull, sleepy feeling, and often an attack of Giddiness. The Face is flushed, the Complexion sallow, and the Skin disfigured by blotches. You feel irritable, out of sorts generally, have a dull Headache, and are greatly depressed in Spirits.

Numbers of people are suffering seriously from Indigestion and its results, when one bottle of Guy's Tonic would bring about a prompt and permanent cure. A few doses will do more for a Weak Stomach than a prolonged course of any other medicine. Nothing can be used with so much certainty in obstinate cases of Delicacy; in fact, no one need remain uncured who will carry out the simple instructions which accompany each bottle of Guy's Tonic.

"Suffered Seven Years."

"Tate Schools, Wexford.
"I have received inestimable "benefit from Guy's Tonic. The "medicine has only to be known "to be thoroughly appreciated. "I have been subject to Indigestion for seven or eight years, "and I have never got any real "relief till now.
"H. CANNING, EX. R. W. J."

"Indigestion for 10 Years."

"Netherton Iron Works, "near Dudley.
"Six months ago my Wife was "under the Doctor for a month. "She had been suffering from "Indigestion for ten years; but "I am pleased to tell you that "after taking three or four doses "of Guy's Tonic she says she has "not felt so well for years.
"E. BYWATER."

"Suffered Twenty Years."

"Sutton Bridge.
"My Wife for twenty years has "suffered from Indigestion. She "has been trying Doctors and all "sorts of medicine, *but got worse.* "This winter she has been very "low-spirited, and the eating of "a very small biscuit only has "caused Pain and Sickness. Seeing your advertisement, she "thought she would try Guy's "Tonic. She did so, and I can "safely say she is better than she "has been for years. Since taking "Guy's Tonic her Appetite has "improved, and she is decidedly "stronger. "J. T. ROSE."

"Suffered Sixty Years."

MR. HENRY SALMON, of Coxley House, Wells, Somerset, writes:

"For sixty years or more I "have suffered from Indigestion, "Wind, and Pain in the Side and "Pit of the Stomach, which at "times made me *almost wish I "was dead*—in fact, I have often "wished I was out of it. I heard "of Guy's Tonic, took one bottle, "left off Tea, took a glass or two "of cider a day (not more), and "before I had taken the last dose "of Guy's Tonic *I was free from "pain.* I have had a second "bottle of Guy's Tonic, and *am "quite relieved.*

"Suffered a Lifetime."

"Bishopstowe, Sussex.
"Having suffered *nearly all my "life* from Indigestion, and never "having found anything to do "me good till I was advised to "take Guy's Tonic, I am writing "you my grateful Thanks for the "Benefit I have had from Guy's "Tonic, and recommending it to "all my friends.
"M. J. JONES."

Guy's Tonic is a Vegetable Preparation of widely proved value in obstinate and chronic cases of Indigestion, Sluggish Liver, and Nervous Weakness.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 526.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending January 28th, 1899.

A Shattered Idol.

I was making my way home from the East by easy stages, and had accepted the invitation of my friend Donald Carmichael to pay him a visit in Florence, where he had made his home for the past five or six years.

One afternoon, when we were on our way to the lovely heights of Fiesole, my attention was arrested by a shop window containing the most exquisite bits of sculpture, as well as plaster casts of the best antique works, that were marvels of skill and artistic taste.

"Stop a minute, Carmichael," I exclaimed, dashing into the shop.

The proprietor, a handsome, stately man, no longer young, and yet in full possession of his manly vigour, with courteous, dignified manners, rose from his comfortable arm-chair in which he had been enjoying his *siesta*, and waited upon me with a grandiloquent reserve that was totally unlike the usual avidity of Italian shopkeepers.

I completed my purchases and he bowed me to the door with the air of a prince. Donald was waiting outside in evident impatience, and we had hardly gone a yard before he burst out: "Conceited blackguard, that! I should like to duck him in a horse-pond!"

I tried to defend my stately art dealer by saying:

"He is evidently above his position. He ought to have been a sculptor himself, not a shop-keeper."

"Oh, you don't know Fabiani! He's beneath contempt. His whole success and well-being—he has the best business of the kind in Florence—are founded upon a social crime!"

"A crime!" I repeated incredulously, struck by the bitter emphasis of his words.

"Yes, a crime. It's rather a long story, but it will beguile the tedium of waiting for the electric tram, if you care to hear it. Thirty years ago, there lived in an old

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palace not far from here the Marchese di Fiorelli and his young daughter, Gianetta. They were the last of their race, and had inherited the ruin wrought by their reckless ancestors as the only appendage to their ancient name.

"The household consisted merely of an old female servant, who did the marketing and prepared their frugal meals, and her son, whose duties were various; the principal of them being the honour of taking the Marchese and his daughter for their daily afternoon drive in the old carriage upon which were emblazoned the arms of the House of Fiorelli, drawn by an ancient steed, whose condition seemed to match the fallen fortunes of its master.

"No one but themselves knew the daily sacrifices that were made to keep up this one outward symbol of departed glory. It was the only joy of the old man's heart, the one bright spot in the darkness of his beggary, to take his seat in his family coach and drive to the public gardens, where he would dismount, and, taking his daughter on his arm, walk up and down listening to the music for an hour or so.

"And Gianetta had her own delight in these daily expeditions, for their way lay past a sculptor's studio, and at the large window was ever to be seen the handsome face and faultless form of Beppo Fabiani, the lazy model-apprentice, who, in those days, was fonder of casting love glances than sticking to his work.

"Pretty Gianetta had known nothing but age and unlovely poverty in her short life, and the ardent glances shot from Beppo's lustrous eyes stirred her foolish heart, till she looked back with bashful tenderness, and looks grew into smiles and silent greetings.

"At last they met, and the stolen fruit was sweet to her guileless inexperience. Old Caterina, the housekeeper, hurt her foot, and was unable even to hobble to market, so the Marchese was roused out of his habitual study of the family archives so far as to give his consent to Gianetta going out to do the marketing alone, provided she kept clear of the more crowded streets.

"For some days she obeyed his instructions, and then the longing for change, the thirst for excitement, which is so strong in youth, the desire to realise her beautiful dream, to approach the object of her constant thoughts, drove her wilful little feet past the sculptor's door. It was mid-day. Nearly everyone was taking their siesta, and the street was deserted. There could be no harm when there was no one about—but Beppo was lounging under the awning at the open door.

"Her heart beat wildly, and she lowered her eyes as she passed him, though she could feel his burning glance upon her, and before she had gone many steps she turned and stole a furtive look at the hero of her dreams. He smiled and slowly started to follow her.

"She quickened her pace, and, like a frightened fawn, almost ran to escape from that which, in her heart, she desired so earnestly, till she found herself in a quiet little street that ended in blank wall with Beppo standing before her.

"He addressed her in a tender, deferential way, and bent to kiss her hand as if she had been his liege lady. Fascinated by his beauty and subtle charm, she gave herself up to the joy of his presence, and her innocent day-dream merged into the love of her life.

"They met again, almost daily in the heat of the noonday sun, and Gianetta's love grew with each meeting. To Beppo it was a new sensation to find himself in the society of a high-born girl, who combined with her patrician charm the simplicity of a peasant maid, and soon his ambition and cupidity were aroused. The daughter of a Marchese, who drove by every day in his own carriage, would surely be a good match for him, Beppo Fabiani, who had only his beauty to recommend him.

"In a few weeks he began to talk of marriage, gently, insinuatingly, with hints at the alternative of an eternal separation that made the girl ready to make any sacrifice for him, and though Gianetta knew her father too well to hope for his consent to such an alliance, she trusted to his fatherly love to pardon the deed when done.

"Beppo's cunning soon found a plan, and it was arranged that on the following Sunday she was to feign a headache and remain in the carriage while her father took his stroll in the gardens. As soon as he was out of sight, Giannetta was to slip out and join her lover at their trysting place, where he would have a hired conveyance in readiness to take them to the village of Rifredi, and from there they would appeal to the Marchese.

"All went well, and the afternoon sun was pouring into the little inn parlour where the lovers were rejoicing in their success, when the tall, spare figure of the Marchese darkened the low doorway. His coachman had told him something was wrong, and they had set off in pursuit as soon as possible.

"Gianetta was so intoxicated with her love and admiration for the handsome Beppo, that she was blind to the grief and anger in her father's eyes, and sprang forward to receive his blessing on the union to be so shortly consummated.

"The grave old man put her gently from him, and bade her wait in an adjoining room while he spoke to her companion. He closed the door carefully behind her to save her from the pain of hearing the interview, never realising the difference between those ramshackle walls and the solid masonry of his own palace.

"'And now, sir,' he said calmly, turning to his would-be son-in-law, who was standing in an easy, graceful pose near the window, 'you have helped my daughter into this romantic situation, but you will, of course, see that it is an impossible one?'

"'I love your daughter—and pray—' began Beppo.

"'None of that nonsense,' interrupted the Marchese sternly. 'Are you in a position to make a home for her? You must understand clearly that I can give her no dowry, save her honourable name.'

"'We should not want much,' faltered Beppo, evidently taken aback, 'only just enough to start me in business.'

"'I am utterly ruined,' continued the old man. 'The little I could raise might serve to give you a start *alone*, but not as a married man.'

"'What do you mean, Eccellenza?'

"'I mean that I will compensate you for your disappointment on condition that you never seek to approach my daughter again. I must have your written promise.'

"Gianetta listened for the indignant refusal that she believed would burst from her lover's lips; but, instead, her heart was chilled and her love tortured by a base haggling over the terms of the bargain. At last the sum was agreed upon, the time and place of payment were fixed, and one of the men left the room.

"Was it Beppo or her father? She neither knew nor cared. She hated them both equally for the time, and sank upon the hard couch with her hands pressed to her ears lest she should hear more jarring sounds.

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"When she came to herself her father was bathing her temples, and said gently:

"'Come home, my child.'

"She let him do with her what he would, and they drove back to the city through the sweet-scented summer's night in the shaky old carriage with its time-honoured coat-of-arms on the panels.

"She leant back in hard, tearless misery, till the old man took her hands in his and said in broken tones:

"'Yes, my little one. Men are base—worse than the beasts of the field, sometimes, in their sordid cruelty.'

"Then she knew how his proud heart had suffered too, and that the outward calm with which he had received the blow was born of a series of life-long humiliations. She pressed her burning lips to his cold, withered hand, and nestled close to his side till they reached home.

"Gianetta kept her room for some days after this, and when she again resumed her place as mistress of the house she found her father had discontinued his daily drives. Upon inquiry she discovered that both horse and carriage and all that appertained to them had been sold the day after that memorable excursion to Rifredi."

* * * * *

A week or so after Donald Carmichael had told me this pathetic story, he took me to dine with a great friend of his, "the most fascinating woman in Florence" as he called her. The Marchesa Rudolfi, the rich widow of a man who had died in the War of Independence, was nearer fifty than forty, and she employed no artifice to conceal the advance of years, wherein, perhaps, lay part of her charm.

She lived in the best possible style, and her well-appointed house at once suggested the atmosphere of home, just as she herself invited confidence. There was that in her genuine good-fellowship that made you long to tell her your troubles, and from certain lines in her face, you knew she had passed through the fire of pain.

Our conversation after dinner turned upon social pleasures, and I remarked upon the apparent fondness of the Florentiners for displaying themselves in gorgeous equipages day after day and hour after hour.

"How is it one never sees you grace the gay throng, Eccellenzia?" I asked lightly.

"I do not keep a carriage," she replied quickly, with a painful contraction of her expressive features.

As we were walking home I mentioned the incident to Carmichael.

"It was an unfortunate topic. Her maiden name was Gianetta di Fiorelli," he answered quietly.

Then I remembered where I had seen her before. It was in a bookseller's shop. She came in and asked for a classical work, and while the man was finding it she took up a new volume in a red cover lying on the counter and glanced at the title.

In a moment her lips curled and she threw it down in disdain. After she had left the shop I was curious enough to look and see what had evoked her scorn. It was a work by a popular author, entitled, "The History of a Passion," and I had hardly laid the book down when she had re-entered the shop, and was asking for the very novel she had so lately disdained.

Did she cherish any tender regret for the passion of her youth, as she did penance for the sacrifice her father had made to save her and the honour of their race?

MARY FERMOR.

THE LILY MAID.

WING TEE had come a long distance to cast her lot among us, and in coming she had learnt many things; among others, that what may be mere amusement to a man is fatal to a woman. Huie Chan had incumbered our shores many years, and he also had learnt a few things, but the one was the learning of the woman, while the other was only the learning of the man.

Before adjusting this newly-acquired assortment of miscellaneous learning, Wing Tee set about to accomplish her very laudable purpose in coming to our coast. The Australian missionaries who had penetrated into Wing's domain had lived on the fat of the land, and had introduced their English religion. They had, furthermore, sought to abolish many objectionable native customs, notably the worship of ancestors. In fact, after living among the Australians for a time, Wing soon came to understand that reverence or even common respect for one's parents or ancestors was a thing quite unheard of in the western world, and there were many other prospects quite as alluring.

The good missionaries had made much of the youthful Wing Tee. They had taught her to read and write, and had instructed her in their religion, and had finally declared her converted from the faith of her fathers. Then it was decided that she should be educated to become a missionary, too; accordingly, several struggling foreign missionary societies were saddled with the responsibility and expense of educating the ambitious young Wing in order that she might some day return to her own country and work among her people. And she must be transported to Sydney to be educated.

The lady managers of the foreign missionary board devoted themselves gladly to the care and culture of the Chinese girl, and were well repaid by her industry on becoming Australianised. But, unfortunately, aside from being industrious, Wing Tee was very fair.

* * * * * *

She was pleased to find such a charming bit of Pekin set down in this big city To her surprise, there

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were the same people, the same manners and customs, the same language, and the same delightful odours—the foreign devils called them nauseous smells—that she had left in her dear Pekin. But her one all-absorbing thought was to study and learn so that she might be a missionary, and go back to her own people and live on the fat of the land.

The lady missionaries watched her rapid progress with great pride, and remarked her sound conversion when she repudiated with a fitting horror the heathen practice of destroying the superfluous daughters of a family, and cheerfully accepted the civilised doctrine of the eternal condemnation of unbaptised infants. She was rapidly becoming enlightened.

* * * * *

Huie Chan made this discovery one morning on his way up Sacramento Street, when looking along the high balconied windows blossoming with Chinese lilies, he saw among the round little yellow faces of the flowers another face, somewhat larger, but scarcely less round or less yellow than they. Such a discovery, to be sure, is not unusual. In fact, some such discovery is the inevitable first act of every human comedy; it began with Adam, and will probably be the last thing to stop when time shall cease to be. If both the discoverer and the discovered are foolish, it usually ends in a romance; if only one is foolish and the other wise, it may result in a tragedy; but if both are wise, it usually ends in—nothing at all.

In this case it was not Huie Chan who was wise. He spent dreaming days and sleepless nights wondering who this "lily-maid," as he fondly called her, might be. As for Wing, she had not seen his fatuous smile when he looked up, and had only noticed as he passed that he was fat and walked like a duck.

Huie Chan was a prosperous barber with a flourishing fish-stall in the rear of his shop, and as the lily-maid was always at her window when he passed, he could attribute no more worthy object for her being there than to watch for him; consequently, one morning, instead of continuing on his way past the sweetshop, the restaurant, the basket-maker, to his own little hole-in-the-wall, with its mixture of soap, fish and pomades, he stopped at the low-browed doorway, and made his way up to the door that corresponded with a certain window.

Wing Tee was surprised. She looked up from her book, still conning in her mind the ten commandments, and was not pleased to see her visitor. Being a man, Chan was capable of seeing only one side of a situation, and that his own. He was glad to be there, therefore the lily-maid must be glad to have him there; but the book was not closed, and Wing Tee's eyes were raised only occasionally to answer some platitude, for—she was learning: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

The first visit was not a great success, nor the next; but Chan, nothing daunted, persevered morning, noon, and night.

Finally, Miss Wing was forced to tear her mind from the contemplation of her "thou shalt nots" long enough to consider ways and means of bringing Chan's attentions to a stop. She might lock the door—yes, and to make sure she would tack up a notice, a little pink card, which should say in black characters, "Please do not disturb me."

Accordingly, the appeal for peace was posted on the door at Chan's usual hour of intrusion. And scarcely had the sound of the hammer ceased when Mr. Chan came puffing up the stairs.

"This," he said to himself, "must be intended for some of those babbling lady missionaries, although it does happen to be written in very good Pekinese."

But although Chan was ponderous of build, he was nimble of wit. The door was securely locked, but the transom was open, and through it came the sound of a little smothered giggle.

A table near the door offered the solution, a chair left in the hall made the second step quite easy, if only the table could be induced to bear the double weight.

* * * * *

Aha! his prayer-wads had not stuck for nothing. The table creaked and groaned, but, nevertheless, lent itself to his purpose, and once mounted thereon he could almost reach the transom; then, with the chair on the top of the table, he could put his head quite into the room. That "love laughs at locksmiths" is doubtless as true in the east as in the west, but the oriental laugh unfortunately has not always the desired effect upon the occidental lock.

As poor Chan had expected, the lily-maid was in her usual place by the window, her eyes glued to her book. Giving himself a moment to enjoy in anticipation her surprise at seeing him, he prepared to make his best bob—a bow was impossible—when, to his horror, the jar brought down the transom. A sudden wriggling to free himself sent the table and chair to the floor with a crash, and brought the transom down tighter on his precious neck.

The lily-maid sat motionless. Another wriggle and another tightening. A gentle, gurgling sound finally caused the lily-maid to raise her eyes, but she did not jump nor scream. She surveyed the intruder with unwonted interest. The staring eyes were fixed on her in an agony of appeal. He was certainly very fat; the eyes were scarcely more goggle than usual, and the face, always ugly, was not much worse in purple tones than yellow.

If she made an outcry, and called someone to his rescue, he would perhaps be sufficiently recovered in a few days to continue his visits; if she did nothing, he could not last more than a few moments longer, and she would then be able to pursue her catechism lessons uninterrupted.

The gurgling thing in the transom still followed her with beseeching eyes, the purple tones grew darker and spotty, then the eyes rolled up in a most unpleasant manner, showing a lower rim of white. When the tongue began to loll out of the half open mouth, the lily-maid lost interest in the Thing. Then the gurgling subsided into a faint, spasmodic puffing, and finally ceased altogether.

When satisfied there was no danger of any further interruption from what had once been Chan, she turned her back upon It, and bent her eyes upon her book, the gift of the lady missionaries, for she had reached the sixth now, and repeated to herself triumphantly: "Thou shalt not kill! Thou shalt not kill!"

FRANK GRIMSHAW.

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An Ungentlemanly Tiger.

THE royal Malay tiger is no gentleman. If he were, the following would never have been told.

Punda-Tsang was an innkeeper. He was sole proprietor of the Ballawari-Dak, which is a very big name for a very small native hotel about sixty miles north of Penang, and on the high road to the Bukit, or hill-country. The quaint little structure clung to the mountain side like a swallow's nest, high over the jungle-bedded Sungei, whose foaming, crashing torrents came down from the upper mountains like an endless charge of white cavalry to the sea.

Punda was a good sort of a Malay, which means a bad sort of anything else. That is, he would plunder only on the securest principles, and never quarrel with a bigger man nor a better armed one than he. In this he differed from other Malays, who would plunder and knife upon no principle or provocation whatever, if they thought there was a ten-anna piece to be gained.

But a deeper reading of this prosperous Boniface of the jungle revealed the fact that he was capable of love, yes, even a tender human affection; and that little Iali, his five-year-old daughter, was the object of a worship in his heart even more fervent than that which he bestowed upon the five home-made clay gods before which, in a dark corner of the Dak, he burned a vast amount of thought ill-smelling stuff.

The second year of Tsang's married life had hardly begun when his beautiful wife was bitten by a yellow viper while gathering healing herbs down in the valley. When they found the poor creature she was dying. This calamity the bereaved husband regarded as a direct visitation of the clay gods in the corner; only the day before had he robbed a hunter of his rifle, leaving the poor fellow to make his way unarmed down to the sea, where he ran upon a pair of vicious species of Malay chimpanzee, in fleeing from which he fell over the cliff and was dashed to pieces. And Punda-Tsang always felt that that yellow viper was sent direct from the land of judging gods to avenge the blood of the poor hunter.

But there was one thing that mitigated the harshness of this vengeance—the presence of the little baby girl, whom he tenderly cherished, and whom he called Iali, which is to say "forgiven." But even were not the little creature a messenger of forgiveness to the penitent savage heart, she was more than worthy of his worship and love.

This child of the tropic forest was restless and agile as a young panther, with lustrous black eyes, and a wild, wayward nature, much spoilt by the wayfarers and fawned upon by the coolies that swarmed about the compound.

One day two British naval officers stopped at the Dak on their way down from a hunt in the hill country. We were seated under the palms before the bungalow after tiffin, smoking cheroots, while I listened to their exploits with interest.

Suddenly four native Malays approached, wheeling a live tiger in a clumsey wooden cage, and halted before the Dak. They were going to dispose of him to a naturalist down on the coast, who had a method of killing and stuffing animals by which the marvellous lustre of their skins was preserved.

The animal was certainly a magnificent specimen. If you have never seen a live tiger fresh from the jungle, take my word for it, the ordinary caged tiger at shows is as much like the former as tinned strawberries are like the fresh, lustrous fruit of June or July. The officers thought so, too, as they decided to buy him, and take him home for presentation to the Zoo.

They bought the animal, set the natives' hearts rejoicing, and started down the coast, while Punda-Tsang, not content with exacting fifty per cent. commission from the poor fellows for using his Dak for a tiger mart, committed the meanest act of his life.

He slyly sawed one of the cage bars nearly through in four places. Then he went to work, planning to waylay the tiger on his way back to his haunts after he had broken loose, which he knew would happen before the officers could get many miles down the valley.

He quietly pursued his planning until late at night, when he heard upon good authority that the tiger had broken his cage and nearly killed one of his owners. Then he prepared to put his plans into action.

Here we reach the illustration of the first-mentioned fact, of which Tsang was ready to take advantage; that the Malay tiger is no gentleman. He knew that the beast will never walk up leisurely and take his bite, but that the very moment he smells blood he will drop flat, and, even if the feast is a mile away, will begin a slow, creeping journey towards it, wasting hours, perhaps, and working up a terrific hunger in the meantime.

When he has approached within twenty feet of the prize, quivering with desire and terrible with greed, he will leap into the air like a cannon-ball and plunge down upon his victim.

Punda-Tsang knew all this, so he dug a pit down in the valley, constructed a network of branches over it, and laid a quarter of a bullock upon it. Then he waited for the tiger to scent the blood and make his slow, crawling journey, knowing that when he had made the grand twenty-foot leap he would go crashing through the network into the pit below.

Then Tsang planned he would starve the beast, let down a cage baited with more fresh meat, and, sliding the bars from above, haul the captured tiger out and sell him over again. All of this might have happened, but it didn't. Events somewhat strange and more terrible for Punda-Tsang intervened, and upset his arrangements.

As little Iali was the innkeeper's constant solace and companion, she went with him to the pit-digging, her father explained to her the manner of capturing the "four-footed jungle-god."

With the appearance of the new moon, that mascot of the Orientals, the pit was baited. For two days nothing was heard of the tiger, and Punda-Tsang began to

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fear that he had gone back to the hills by another route.

On the afternoon of the third day I sat on the cliff's edge, watching the mists rise from the roaring river bottom, a phenomenon which always accompanies the closing day. Suddenly there was a shuffling of sandals about the compound, and I knew that something extraordinary was taking place. I turned quickly, the big form of Punda-Tsang, the innkeeper, burst upon me suddenly, his flat face as pallid as a demon's, ferocious, but with the ferocity of nameless fear.

"Iali!" he cried hoarsely. 'Have you seen Iali?"

"No!" I replied, almost in a whisper.

He did not wait, but sped towards the so-called bullock-sheds, which were really caves cut in the solid rock beyond the Dak. I had become attached to the child, whose wonderful beauty had charmed, and whose weird ways mystified me. But I had never been alone with her, knowing that any accident happening to Iali while in my keeping would result seriously to me—perhaps cost me my life.

The coolies were flying hither and thither, making the air ring with their loud wails. Such agitation on the part of these vagabonds roused me to the realisation of the child's danger. Suddenly I turned my eyes and thoughts in the direction of the ravine where the tiger trap lay. I recalled vividly the child's interest in the "jungle-god," who was to be captured in the deep pit, and, knowing the little creature's absolute fearlessness, thought that, acting upon some childish impulse, she might have strayed down the narrow path to the pit.

I dropped over the ledge, soon reaching the pathway by a short cut. As I penetrated the jungle, now suffused with mist in the ruby glow of the perspiring day, I realised with what risk to myself I was entering this dangerous spot, all unarmed.

I was still debating whether or not to return for a weapon of defence when, as I leapt over a soft spot in the soft clay, I saw two footprints that struck terror into my heart; one was that of a tiger, the other belonged to a little child.

I dropped down beside them. No; there was no mistaking them, so clear and fresh were both. I rose to my feet, my head whirling, my ears half deafened by the noise of the jungle insects and the increasing roar of that river beyond. Then I crept forward, scarcely daring to breathe, my heart beating faster and faster with apprehension.

The distance to that tiger-pit seemed to be doubled, and the time that elapsed before reaching it everlasting. The crackling of the leaves and twigs on the moss beneath my feet added to my trepidation. Almost before I realised it I had reached the big trap, and then I stopped short, thrilled by a sound.

I looked up. Through the deepening mists and intervening boughs I saw the little child-figure of Iali creeping out upon the withered branches over the pit.

For an instant I had no power to move, or dare I speak lest, overcome by sudden fright, the frail little one might lose her foothold. Suddenly a new horror disclosed itself. What were those two glaring, cold, yet fiery points just beyond the pit, burning their way through the shadows?

Heavens! It was the tiger! He was lying flat on the ground, couchant, paws extended, quivering, ready for the fatal spring!

In moments like these one's reasoning powers become superhuman. I saw that in all probability either Iali or I was to be sacrificed, which one depended merely upon the caprice of the wild beast. I had heard that the calm, steady, fearless stare of a human being is more terrifying to wild animals than guns that kill. On the instant I resolved to practise it; it was my only expedient. So I stared at those two coldly bright and glowing points of light like a madman, without a quiver, without a doubt.

Suddenly I saw the little figure waver on the dead branches over the mouth of the pit, and then—oh, horrors! With a weak cry poor little Iali lost her foothold and slipped through the yielding boughs into the cave beneath.

For a moment all was silent. Then I heard her childish prattle. The soft sand had broken Iali's fall, and saved her life, while I was brought face to face with the most awful problem of my life.

For hours, as it seemed, I stood like a pillar of stone, the sweat pouring down my neck, my tongue hot and parched. One show of fear would, I knew, be fatal. The "jungle-gods" are keen, like demons, measuring strength with man. How long could I keep up this maddening strain? How long could I force upon this beast the illusion of my superior will?

All at once, as I stood like one in a trance, facing this growing problem, I was conscious of a stir in the reeds and underbush at my right hand. Though the sound caused me to tremble, I dare not take eyes from the crouching monster beyond.

The next instant, a strange huge shape crept stealthily out of the underwood, and advanced into the clearing toward the pit—a ponderous black monster with the body of a beast, but lifting through the grass the head and shoulders of a human colossus. It was an enormous ourang-outang.

The tiger crouched lower. He seemed to be nonplussed, as stunned by the intrusion of this huge interloper as I was. In silence he transferred his burning gaze to the ourang-outang.

Advancing to the very edge of the pit, the huge ape slipped, but he recovered. Sly beast! He saw that the branches were only a blind. Then he walked round the edge of the trap, and knelt down like a human being, slowly, deliberately reaching out his long hairy arm till his giant hand clutched that bullock bone.

Oh, what joy that calm, providential deed brought to my heart!

Then, to my intense relief, the ourang-outang slowly dragged the great mass of flesh off the network of the branches to the solid ground.

For a moment longer the gleam of those two terrible eyes followed the unsuspecting pilferer. Then came a rustle, a strange shriek like sudden thunder, a bound, and a roar, and the "jungle-god" had sprung into the air, and came down like a flashing avalanche full upon the broad body of the kneeling ape. A single paw struck the huge creature in the small of the back, and never shall I forget the sound of that blow, which broke the bones of the victim's spine like a cannon ball.

With an almost human groan, the preserver of my life, and of hers whom I came to save, gave up the booty, together with his own life. Then the tiger, with a final flash of the eyes full into my own, snatched up the meat in his jaws, and glided off into the thick of the jungle.

I have often wondered since how things would have turned out if that tiger had been a gentleman.

GEORGE DRUMMOND.

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MY DREAM-MAIDEN.

I WAS disgusted with boarding houses; I could not afford to live at an hotel; I was engaged upon some literary work, and the atmosphere of the boarding house, where I had a particular peg on the hat-rack, and a particular girl to "make eyes" at me, was not a favourable atmosphere in which to condense in an attractive form the ideas and fancies that chased each other through my brain.

Seated one night at my window, looking through the evening newspaper—it was early spring and the days were lengthening—I seemed irresistibly drawn to the column devoted to advertisements for the sale of real estate. This was queer, for I had no interest in real estate, but, yielding to the impulse, I read every advertisement. Such splendid bargains; such glorious attractions! Yet, strange to say, in the whole lot there was but one that appealed to me. It was this:

FOR sale, a small house in quiet neighbourhood in good repair and comfortably furnished. Apply to Walker & Co., 7 Elm Street.

I read this through three times. I cut it out.

Visions of a home of my very own; an undisturbed retreat into which I could retire and remain until my work was finished, ran riot through my brain. I could read no more in the paper. I paced up and down the room and keeping pace with my steps were the words, "For sale, a small house in a quiet neighbourhood, in good repair and comfortably furnished." I tried to think of something else. It was of no use. I went to bed and lay awake thinking.

It was morning. I was a little way out in the country, far enough out to see the trees putting on their tender robes of green, to hear the birds and the running waters. I looked up and saw the sign, "Lone Street." I passed down Lone Street, to an abrupt turning and stepped into Wilder Lane.

There was but one house in it, and it stood squarely fronting the observer. Of that house I was in quest. The windows were prettily curtained; there were chairs upon the lawn. In one sat a woman. I lifted my hat as I ascended the path.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "I thought the house was unoccupied. I have the key."

"It is unoccupied," the woman said, still sitting in the chair.

I noticed that she was small, almost childish in build. A heavy mass of dark hair framed an oval face, thoughtful, intelligent, serious. The eyebrows were arched, the eyes a greenish-grey. The nose straight and slender, the mouth firm, with a dimple in one corner and a pitiful droop in the other, as if Fate had not dealt altogether kindly with her.

"And you?" I queried.

"Don't mind me. You will get used to me. I shall sit in this chair as I have sat night after night waiting—waiting for someone who never comes. I shall sit at the table. I shall sit at the window. I shall lie on the bed. I shall run up and down the stairs. I shall sing sometimes, I shall write and write and write. Do you have fancies? Sit down and talk with me."

I sat down. I could not take my eyes off the woman's face. She was singularly fascinating to me. I forgot my errand. I only knew that when I turned the corner of Lone Street into Wilder Lane, I had left discontent behind me. Here on the verandah with this woman of whose existence I knew nothing an hour before, I felt uplifted, mentally and spiritually. Life was indeed worth living—of which at times I had entertained doubts.

We talked. I cannot remember all we said. We talked like people who have known each other for years: who trust each other. I revelled in the interchange of thought; my life had been so solitary. I reached out my hand to clasp hers, which rested on the arm of the chair; a tiny hand with long fingers, unringed. I dropped the key. It fell with a tinkling sound. I started—

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"You never slept so sound before," said my landlady.

The sun was streaming into the window of my room. There was the unmistakable odour of a boiled dinner in the process of construction.

"For sale, a small house, in a quiet neighbourhood." Of course I went there after my dream. I had had many strange dreams in my lifetime, but I could not recollect so impressive a vision as that of the house and the woman in Wilder Lane.

"I am sorry," said the suave Mr. Walker, of Walker & Co., "that I cannot take you out there in my carriage. I am alone to-day and tied down here."

"I can find it," I replied, with an inward rejoicing that the voluble agent could not accompany me. My dream was hanging over me, not disagreeably. I felt certain that I should have some adventure.

It was a beautiful morning. The buds were swelling on the trees; the air was mild; the sky a soft blue with fleecy clouds floating in its cerulean depths. I found Lone Street without difficulty. It seemed very familiar. I had purposely refrained from making any inquiries regarding the history or ownership of the house I was seeking.

At the end of Lone Street there was an abrupt turn, facing me was the house of my sleeping vision! I fully expected to see the woman of my dream sitting there near the front door. I was woefully disappointed, yet there was an air of occupancy about the place, and I foolishly imagined that she had gone inside for a moment. I waited expectantly, idly swinging the key.

I waited five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, then I went slowly up the path and rang the bell. With the impression strong upon me that there was someone inside the house, I dared not turn the key in the lock and enter. I could swear that I heard steps upon the stairs. Imagination plays strange freaks at times. I was wrong.

With the feeling that I was an intruder, a housebreaker, I turned the key with a trembling hand and looked in. I listened for a challenge from the inside: none came. I entered, shutting the door behind me, and found myself in a small hall, at the foot of a straight flight of stairs.

Still feeling an intruder, I went cautiously about, peering into every room before I entered it. I had never been in a house with such a look of homeliness, such cosy comfort, such a pure, sweet atmosphere as here! It was simply but tastefully furnished. The windows were open in every room. I never saw a house with so many windows. Windows in the halls, on the staircases; windows opening into tiny balconies, just large enough for two.

My progress through the house was slow, for I expected every minute to hear some one cry "Halt!" I expected—I hoped most earnestly—to see the dream-maiden. I lingered and listened. A door closed. I leant over the staircase, and I saw nothing; the wind was teasing me.

Having no reasonable excuse for remaining longer, and fully satisfied in my mind that I should return, I left the house reluctantly. Right round the corner in Lone Street a woman stood at the gate. A tall, gaunt woman, large-boned, and plain-featured.

"You have been to inspect the Wilder Lane house?" she asked.

"Yes; and you?—do you own it?"

She laughed. "No; I am the caretaker. I live here. Every day I must do the housekeeping there as if the house were occupied. I shall be glad when someone moves in. Have you a family?"

"No. To tell the truth, I had not thought of the housekeeping. It has to be done; it is one of the necessary evils of life. Could you do it—do it just the same as you do now? It seems so sweet and wholesome there. It seems like home. I never had a real *bonâ fide* home; mine have all been shams, make-believes."

"I would do it," she interrupted. "Have you bought it?"

"Bought it! I have not even talked with the agent about it. Do you know its history?" said I; "every house has a history."

"Yes, I—"

"Don't tell me! Don't ever tell me. You may think it strange, but to me a house has individuality. I respect its past life. If it is best for me to know its history it will be revealed to me."

The tall, gaunt woman looked at me curiously, but said nothing. In her mind I was not quite all there, I felt certain.

May Day found me installed in the house as owner. My arrangements for housekeeping were delightful. The tall, gaunt woman was to do all that was possible of my work in her own house; my washing and ironing were to be done at her home; my food cooked there, but it was to be served in my cosy dining room. Never was a man so favoured; a home without its disagreeable features.

I chose for my chamber the room that had the most masculine air about it. The furniture was solid and substantial.

There was a small writing desk by the window; there were no lace curtains, no feminine needle-work to fuss over, and get angry about. A couch with a dark covering had but one sofa pillow upon it; the pillow was dark also. The pictures upon the walls were such as a man would fancy and admire.

Across the passage from my chamber was a dainty woman's boudoir. The furniture was light and pretty. There was a desk here, but it was a small affair; there was no key in the lock. It did not matter. I could not, and would not open it, had I the means, for on the threshold of this chamber I had paused and wondered if it would be right to intrude.

All day I had felt as if someone were with me; still more I became possessed of the idea as I entered the room. What spirit haunted this house? Who had dwelt therein?

The pictures in this chamber were of noble-looking men, saints and martyrs. There was one large engraving: a great stretch of waters, angry waves dashing against a rock; sitting thereon was a woman, her hair disordered by the wind and spray; one hand held a cloak tightly round her, like a shield from the storm; the other was stretched out, the slender fingers beckoning. I could see nothing to respond. It was a sad picture, and the woman portrayed therein seemed like the dream-woman. So strong was the resemblance, that I wondered what the witchery was that made this face so attractive a one. It was the soul that my eyes divined, and to which my soul answered. With a deep sense of peace, I fastened all the doors and windows below stairs and sought my chamber and rest.

"Come!"

I started. I had not seen her enter. It was indeed the dream-maiden calling me. Standing in the doorway, she looked placidly into my chamber. I felt no embarrassment as I arose, and followed her from the room.

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She led the way down the stairs and into the tiny dining room. We breakfasted. Sitting opposite me, she poured the coffee and sweetened it with a glance that made the blood run warm through my veins.

"This is comfort," she said, and added gravely. "I have waited for you many years."

"Had I known," said I, "I would have come long ago. I have just begun to live. Will it last? It seems too good to be true."

"Will it last! Does anything last! Oh, the long, long years; the secret longings; the few joys, and the many sorrows! I love you."

"Then, indeed, have I entered my kingdom!" I pushed my chair back hastily; I ran towards her. She looked in my eyes, I was about to clasp her in my arms—oh, Heaven! It was night, darkness. I was alone. This had been but a tantalising dream.

I never slept but that she came to me. So real she seemed, so real our conversations, that I sketched her as the heroine of my novel. The book won fame and money for me.

One day, seated at my desk, I pulled out a hitherto unused drawer. Something rattled in it. I put my hand in and I drew out a package wrapped in tissue paper. It was a old-fashioned gold locket. Inside (I could scarcely believe my eyes) was the face of the dream-maiden, my night companion.

The face was as I had seen it a hundred times. What mystery was this? Here indeed was something tangible, something real; there must be such a woman somewhere in real flesh and blood. I must find her. Why had she not sought me after reading my novel? Why did she not reveal herself and not torture me longer? What was this kinship of souls, this intensity of feeling that held this woman and myself by a tie akin to spiritual communion?

I went to her chamber. I sought frantically for other clues to her indentity. At last I sought a key to fit the lock of her desk. Surely it would not be sacrilege to touch her most precious belongings, our lives had been so peculiarly associated.

Within the desk I found poems, unfinished novels, essays, small and clever sketches. Writer and artist, she was doubly talented. I eagerly scanned them all. All were strong and vigorous, but most of them too sad to please the general reader or picture-lover. To me they were a revelation of the life, and heart, and soul, of the only woman in the world that I loved, the only woman who could satisfy my cravings.

"Yes, I know the former owner of the house," said Mr. Walker blandly. "Let—me—see! She lives in Antwerp Street now, No. 13."

"Antwerp Street?" I repeated. "Isn't that a poor locality?".

"A poor place, yes. She lost what little money she had. Her name is Belmont, Desirée Belmont. I always thought it such an old name."

Now I know. In an hour, if Fate were kind, I should be in the presence of the dream-maiden, a dream-maiden no longer. Desirée Belmont, my heart's desire! I threaded my way down the narrow dirty street with a heartache at the thought that she, my dainty sweetheart, lived in so foul and unwholesome a place. I had no idea what I should say. I only knew that I should force her to return to her former home, and I—would go back to lodgings until what I hoped for came to pass.

How wildly and boldly we plunge into the future!

No. 13. Would she answer my ring? I, a strong man, was trembling with excitement. I listened; a slow step echoed from the passage-way, a feeble hand turned the knob. An old lady stood before me; a beautiful old lady with a look like *her* in the eyes.

"Miss Désirée Belmont? Yes; will you step in?" I followed her through the passage into a tiny room.

"Be seated, sir," she said, with a quaint old-fashioned dignity. "It is a long time since an inquiry has been made for Désirée Belmont."

"Surely she is alive, and here," I interrupted excitedly. "I must see her. I can help her, and she can help me."

"Help you, a strong man like you!" said the old lady sadly. "The time was," here a blush reddened her brown skin, "when Désirée Belmont could have been of service to you or anyone. It is past."

"Tell me—tell me at once! Is she not living?"

"Living, yes; I am Desirée Belmont."

"You, you! There is some mistake. There must be a young woman of the same name. Little Désirée! Your niece, perhaps."

"Let us understand each other. I have no niece: I know no other Désiree Belmont"

"Did you ever live in Wilder Lane?"

"Oh, my home, my pretty home!" said the old lady with tear drops slowly trickling down her cheeks. "Tell me about it. Tell me who lives there now. Strange stranger," looking at me earnestly. "I have seen you somewhere—where?"

"Where? Goodness knows!" I exclaimed. "Have you ever seen this locket?"

She clutched it from my hand and looked eagerly at the face of the dream-maiden.

"Yes, yes, that is I—I, when I lived in Wilder Lane, Did you find anything else? I wrote a lot in those days. I was an imaginative girl. Poverty has taken all the imagination out of me. I'm almost worn out, sir; almost."

"How long ago was this? Am I dreaming? Is there no young Desirée Belmont?"

"There was one once," she answered sadly. "I have haunted that house in Wilder Lane ever since I left it in my womanhood. It has been vacant so many years. I paid for perpetual care as one pays for a plot in a cemetery. I was quite happy there, really happy when I forgot myself in my fancies. I loved that house. Every night, almost, I am a girl again. I go back there. I see—yes, I have seen you in a dream! If I had ever married the man I loved, you might have been my son."

I was bewildered. My dream had been shattered, but surely Fate had drawn me there for something.

"Your son," I said, rising and standing over her, pressing back the hair from her forehead tenderly. "Your son I will be. Tell me the name of the man you did not marry."

"Edward Gordon."

"My father! My miserable father! This is a miracle, after all these years. You knew of his death, and of hers—my mother?"

"He died first," said the old lady. "If he had lived, I might have been your second mother, and lived there with you."

I settled her affairs where she was, and took her home with me. Should you pass the house in summer time, you will see her seated in the front garden.

EDGAR GREENE.

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BOOK II.—CONCERNING THE - - VOYAGE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty. They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

The cutter is run down in a fog by a British privateer, giving the fugitives only just time to escape on to the larger vessel as their own goes to the bottom.

The Governor of Lima observes a strange craft cruising in his waters, and orders it to take its departure. The crew defy him, however, and he sends the *Santa Thérèsa* to punish them for their impudence. Unfortunately for him his own men get the worst of it, and Sneyd, attended by Sandy Carmichael, lands and interviews the Governor, demanding an enormous sum as compensation money. This His Excellency reluctantly agrees to pay.

The *Fortune's Favourite*, the snow which rescued our three heroes from a watery grave, to all appearances a simple trader, proved to be an armed adventurer. After cruising about on the Spanish Main, and accumulating much treasure, the captain decides to return home. Before doing so, he dispatches a part of his ship's company, including Sneyd, Carmichael, and O'Neill on a prize vessel in search of fresh adventure.

CHAPTER III. (*continued*).

Two days after the bowsprit began to head towards the south, Gauntlett, who was leaning over the weather bulwark aft, uttered an exclamation, and gave hurried orders to have the vessel hove-to. She lay head to wind, with heavily slatting canvas, and the watch below somewhat naturally came up on deck to see what was to do.

"Ambergrease!" exclaimed the captain, pointing to three lumps of bright greyish matter, which every now and again appeared on the crest of a swell, some half-cable's length away on the quarter. "There's value there equal to 'arf the dollars we've got below. Away aloft there, some o' ye, and rig tackles to get the jolly-boat into the water. There's the ladies o' the court, and them as loves parfumes, 'll give more'n its weight in gould fer this ambergrease."

The little boat was lifted from its chocks amidship, swung over the side, and splashed into the water. O'Neill lowered himself down and took the sculls. Sneyd sat in the stern-sheets. "Here, Doctor," said Gauntlett, "you've delicate fingers, do you go too, and pick up every bit you can see, though it be no larger than a grout piece." So Sandy Carmichael got into the boat, which rowed off, leaving the bulwark rail of the schooner lined with bearded faces, all agog with curiosity.

O'Neill rowed on with lusty strokes, and Sneyd was soon able to pick up the first piece of ambergris, a lump weighing some five and a half or six pounds. It was solid, opaque, and of a bright grey colour, intermixed with reddish striae. It was sufficiently soft to yield under the fingers like stiff putty, and when pressed it exhaled a most delicious odour.

"More plazing job to the nose this, yer honour, than steeping flax," remarked O'Neill. "And it's meself that knows what a flax-pit sniffs like when they're takin' out the stuff."

"I don't know what steeped flax smells like," said Sneyd, "but I don't wonder at people who can afford luxuries, paying fabulous prices for a substance which emits an odour so heavenly as this."

It was uncommon to find this precious grey substance in any quantity, and consequently Captain Gauntlett did not think it worth while to lower either of his larger boats to aid in the collection. And those in the jolly-boat were quite of the same opinion. They thought that every next half-dozen strokes would bring them to the end of the store. The fragments were getting smaller, certainly. None were larger than a clenched hand. Many were as tiny as hazel nuts. But all were worth collecting. And wishing to take full advantage of an opportunity which might not occur again in the lifetime of any of them, they gleaned the sea with abundant care, and did not miss a fragment that their eyes fell upon.

So fully were they taken up by the excitement of their employment that time had passed by unnoticed, and it was not till the boom of a gun reached them across the water, that they unwrapped themselves from their enthralling pursuit, and lifted their eyes from the ocean surface in their own immediate neighbourhood. But at the signal, which was evidently intended to attract their attention, they looked up, and found that, what with their own rowing and the schooner's drift, at least six long sea miles separated them.

"The schooner's hull-down," said Sneyd, with some uneasiness.

"And taking in canvas, an' makin' things snug generally," added O'Neill.

"There goes another gun," remarked Sandy, who had noted the flash and the smoke; and, sure enough, a minute afterwards the sound boomed sullenly across the swell to their ears.

"Well," said Sneyd, "we'll obey orders and turn back, especially as I don't think there's much more of this grey stuff to collect. But I do wonder what has turned up to

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make the skipper call us back in that peremptory fashion. Two guns! It must be something pretty serious. He's not the man to blow away blank cartridge for nothing."

"It's dirthy weather, yer honour, that's what the skipper's making all snug for. See, his maintopmast's sthruck, an' that's the foret'gallant-yard they're afther lowerin' on deck this minute. See now, if yez give me one of the oars, and stick to the other yerself, it's there we'll be in half no time. Sandy, do you ship the rudder, and don't let us row round more corners than's needful."

They bent to their oars, and shoved the tubby little boat through the water with all the speed she was capable of.

Meanwhile, the sky to windward was darkening rapidly with heavy masses of black cloud, which sprung up from under the horizon, and spread rapidly over the hitherto blue heavens. The sun grew lurid, red, angry; and at last it was blotted completely from sight. A deep twilight fell over the ocean, and the breeze died away completely. The air was stifling hot; and although lightly clad, the two rowers were almost choked with their exertions. Yet they worked like horses, and tugged at their oars with the desperate energy of men who knew what they had to expect if they did not regain their ship in time.

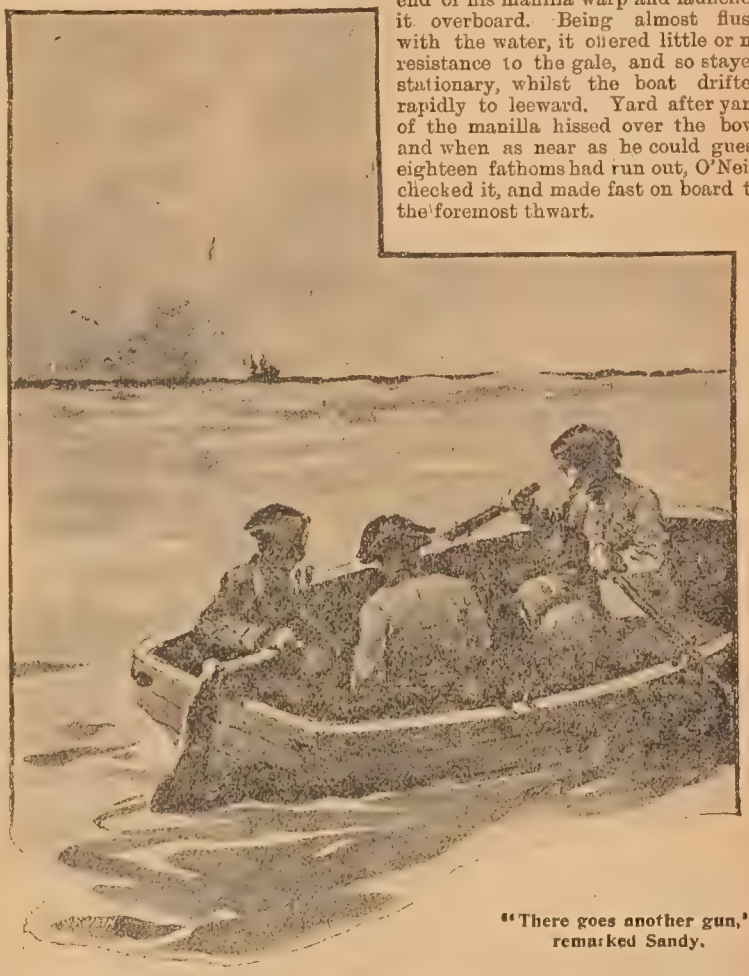
The moan of the storm began to reach them over the waters, and herald its coming.

Sandy sat in the stern, tiller in hand, steering carefully. Every inch of way was important, and he didn't intend to deviate a hand's-breadth from the straight course, if careful steering could do it. The rowers glanced at his still set face every now and again, but they could learn nothing from it. Sandy's countenance, from the early training of that man Duncan Carmichael, was never particularly indicative of his feelings; and when at all excited, it was more wooden and expressionless than ever.

The noise of the gale grew louder as the wind-storm approached; and presently, after a few sharp squalls, the hurricane burst upon them with its full strength.

By a rapid glance over his shoulder, O'Neill saw that the schooner was in the thick of it, more than a mile away from them; and that they had no more chance of reaching her then, than of climbing to the moon. Indeed, there was little prospect of anything except swamping before them. But he was a brave man—brave as his companions were brave—and he did not intend to die without an effort. So, tossing his oar into the after rowlock, he bade Sneyd take the pair and keep the boat head to wind as well as he could, with Sandy's help. Of course, she was drifting away before the constant succession of terrific squalls that swept down on her, but that did not matter much so long as she did not meet the wind with her broadside, and get blown bodily over.

Beyond the ordinary swell, there was not much sea on as yet. The wind and the rain kept it from rising with much rapidity. But all hands knew that there would be heavy waves running before long; and from them would come the greatest danger. The cockle-shell of a boat might, by dint of severe exertion, be kept head on to them, but their breaking crests would inevitably swamp her. O'Neill was working to prevent this. By a happy streak of providence, there was a coil of good inch and a half manilla lying in the bow. Tossing the precious store of ambergris into the seething waters alongside with as little compunction as though it had been shingle ballast, the Irishman got up the floor gratings of the boat, her mast, and tiny lug-sail, and lashing them into a secure raft, bent on one end of his manilla warp and launched it overboard. Being almost flush with the water, it offered little or no resistance to the gale, and so stayed stationary, whilst the boat drifted rapidly to leeward. Yard after yard of the manilla hissed over the bow, and when as near as he could guess eighteen fathoms had run out, O'Neill checked it, and made fast on board to the foremost thwart.



"There goes another gun," remarked Sandy.

The sea was rising rapidly now, and the spindrift from the top of the waves was cutting like sleet through the air, but the boat felt the drag on it, and ran up and down the liquid hills and valleys squarely and accurately. Sneyd had unshipped his sculls as soon as the floating anchor had got the little craft in check, and was sitting down on the bottom boards aft along with his companions.

They did not speak to one another. A shout would not have made itself heard; and although they might have interchanged ideas by means of signs, neither had much to say to the others. Theirs was an almost hopeless look-out. They had seen the schooner run past them under bare poles, in the first squall, her people looking at the tiny boat helplessly, hopelessly. And when the vessel shot away into the storm-wrack, they knew they might never expect to see her again. Even supposing both were afloat and undamaged when the weather moderated, as it was bound to do sooner or later, what hope was there of coming together again?

And, moreover, they need not reckon upon being picked up by other craft. The South Pacific is a tolerable desert

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even to-day; but then, there was not one vessel on it for five hundred one would find now, and they would be far away from the track of even these scanty few.

But still, absolutely helpless as their case appeared to be so far as human judgment could discern, none of the three was of that breed which gives in till the bitter end. A weak mind might have said, "I am born to die, why prolong an easy death into a death of agony?" and, going forward, cut the warp and have been comfortably drowned in less than a couple of minutes. A Spaniard would have occupied his time in calling vigorously to the saints who would probably neglect his petition, and give him no help. A Turk would have said "Kismet," and have bothered his head about no matters sublunary or otherwise any further. But these three Britons had no notion of throwing up the sponge till they were forced to.

The jolly-boat was a heavy, clumsy, apple-bowed little structure, very different from even the North Sea trawler's punt of to-day—and that is the most solidly built craft I can think of. But although she was not good for racing purposes, she was well adapted to the use her builder intended her for—namely, to live in a heavy sea. A smart yacht's boat of similar capacity would have been swamped in ten minutes with the sea running as nastily as it was then; if, indeed, she had not collapsed into primitive staves before that time. But this bluff-bowed little tub of the last century rode out the blow with comparative ease. She wasn't dry by any means. Nothing could have been, with such a tearing pother of broken water about. But she never shipped anything green, and the white wave-tops that splashed hungrily over her stout sides were quickly hove overboard again to the place whence they came.

Sandy sat on the stern thwart with a shrunken hand on the tiller.

The sea-anchor was certainly a great help. A huge green curling wave would swoop up, with its bending crest already whitening. If that were unchecked, it would sprawl over the boat and send her down without further ado. But when such a roller reached these spars and sails and gratings, it had to break willy-nilly, and its shattered fragments would sweep shrieking on, and the little boat would wriggle over the yeasty *débris*, and take scarcely so much as a bucketful on board.

Through half the night did the hurricane rage with unabated fury; and then the wind dropped almost as suddenly as it had arisen.

There was still, of course, a heavy sea running. But from long oily swells such as these were, the boat need fear no danger; and, worn out by what they had gone through, the three occupants one by one nodded off, and fell asleep.

When they woke up the sun was just past meridian, and baking hot. There was no cloud in the sky, but a gentle breeze from the eastward ruffled the surface of the heavy swells which were sweeping up with monotonous regularity.

All were suffering acutely from thirst already, all were stiff and cramped from lying in the boat, all awoke unrefreshed; but each bore his discomfort without complaint.

Sneyd was the first to speak. "We must stand in towards the coast," he said, as cheerfully as if they'd but an easy half-hour's sail before them. "See if there's a compass in the after-locker, Sandy. There was one on board the day before yesterday, for I saw it myself."

Sandy reported the compass on board and uninjured, and the other two busied themselves with heaving up the sea-anchor, unlashing the heterogeneous collection of which it was composed, and getting each item on board and stowed in its place. Then the mast was stepped, and the sail, a standing lug, run up and sheeted flat home, for the very wind was against them, and beating in so light a breeze would practically be useless. Their flat-bottomed, round-bowed little tub would make far more leeway than she would gain in the other direction, and they might quite as well, if not better, have remained at their sea-anchor.

Each knew this, but each was anxious to be rid of the maddening sense of inaction. Energetic, all three, by nature, the idea of sitting still, waiting for death, was more than they could endure. Far better make a struggle for it, even though that struggle was obviously useless.

So the boat was close-hauled as near as she would go, and, taking it in turns to steer, they sent her slowly and slantwise over the rollers, on a course which would have brought them to somewhere or other on the Californian coast, if it had been persisted in long enough. Of course, they had no intention to journey that far. This was only the first board of a series of tacks which was to bring them to the nearest land of South America. They even kept up the farce by beginning to discuss what they should do when they landed, how the Spaniards would treat them, and how they should behave towards the Spaniards. But this effort at cheerfulness failed. One by one they dropped out of the conversation. Their mouths were dry and parched. Their aching tongues had swollen up to double the normal size, and were covered with a dark and gluey fur.

Keeping their clothes moist with sea-water afforded some relief; for the moisture creeps in through the pores of the skin; but it did not assuage the intense longing for drink.

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In the night it rained.

Fearful lest the shower might be short, they greedily sucked the first drops as they fell on their brine-encrusted clothes; and then caught more in their hats, and drank out of them delicious draughts that seemed of nectar. Then the rain downpoured with tropical violence, and by spreading out the sail across the thwarts they collected a couple of quarts. For want of a better vessel to stow it in, this precious fluid was run into the wooden baler; and, in order to keep this from spilling, one or other of them had to sit with it between his hands, and watch every movement of the boat with jealous care. Their hats were, all three of them, leaky and porous, and so unsuited for reservoirs. But they answered for drinking vessels, and, before the rain ceased, they had each of them imbibed as much water as he could hold.

This liquid meal rendered the pangs of hunger, which were beginning to make themselves very painful, less acute; but it did not remove them. The three poor fellows felt faint and weak. To stand up was to be overcome with dizziness. Lying down was the only position approaching ease. He who had charge of the precious wooden baler was thoroughly exhausted with his efforts at the end of an hour's spell.

Another day dragged itself through, and another night, and again they found themselves without water. The fierce sun had robbed them of much of their little store and, despite the jealous care of him who handled it, a drop would occasionally splash over the side of the wooden vessel, and be lost irretrievably. It yielded little more than a mouthful apiece, and what was that in such a climate?

On the morning of the third day the two elders were lying helplessly on the floor gratings. The ex-cornet of horse was worst. He was almost unconscious.

Sandy, although the youngest, seemed to bear up best under the trial. The hard usage of his younger days had done him this service at any rate, though it is to be doubted whether Duncan Carmichael had any such end in view when he applied his course of treatment. But the result was valuable in this time of need. Sandy sat on the stern thwart with a shrunken hand on the tiller, and a pinched face turned now to the luff of the lug-sail, and now to the ocean to windward.

He could steer by instinct, and instinct taught him to cast an occasional glance to see what the weather was going to be; and, doing these matters without trouble, he had his brain at liberty to ponder over other things.

During the first part of the day Sandy was much too tired and feeble to think much, and when the midday heat was at its highest and most cruel strength, he expected every minute to topple helplessly over like the other two in the bottom of the boat. But when the baking afternoon began to cool somewhat, Sandy began to be haunted by a vision of some strange bird-like creature that he could not understand at all.

He didn't think it was an ordinary feathered biped that was annoying him, for if it had been he would have recognised it. A great sea-fowl—an albatross, he thought it was—had been hovering near the boat all day, and it was there even then. He could make it out clearly enough—beak, pinions, everything. But still this other bird, or whatever it was, produced too blurred an image on his retina to produce any definite impression.

"My brain must be going," he told himself. "That book of Dr. Menteith's, 'Ye Illusions offe ye Dying,' mentioned it as a symptom of those who perish from hunger and thirst."

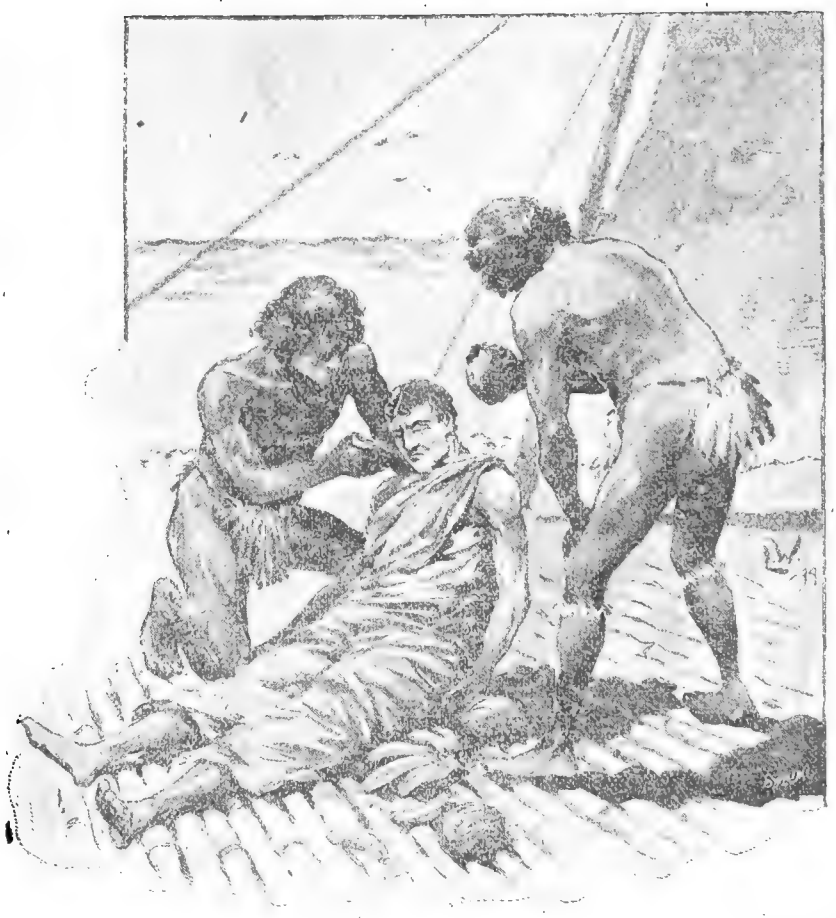
He passed a hand wearily across his eyes, and looked about him again. There, overhead, was the great sea-fowl, grimly waiting till his meal should be ready. There, in the boat's wake, was a black triangle, like a tiny lateen sail, which never deviated from its relative position. But Sandy took very little notice of either fowl or fish. That

Mytto shaded his eyes with a hand, and gazed afresh.

they were waiting to make a meal of his carcase troubled him little just then. It was the strange thing ahead that perplexed and worried him. He had always been of an inquiring turn, and his late training had brought out the latent thirst for information which lay within him. At this, one of his last moments, there was a strange living thing of some kind—he felt sure it was living—within reasonable distance, and he could neither make head nor tail of it. Presently he would die, and the chance would be lost.

It was a grotesque idea. If he did come near enough to this strange animal to classify and make notes on its peculiarities, the discoveries could not be handed along. They would die with him. But though quite aware of this, he didn't think it mattered particularly. Once he had got near enough to this strange bird—he was sure it was a bird now; he could distinguish its wings; great, grey wings—once close abreast of this bird, his curiosity would be satisfied, and he would just lie down on the grating and close his eyes.

To put the matter bluntly, Sandy had become light-headed. The two men in the bottom of the boat were by this time quite unconscious. They were lying absolutely still, with a few gallons of sea-water splashing backwards and forwards over them, and might well have been taken for dead. The steersman would not be long before he joined them. His half-crouched body was swaying with every roll of the boat. His eyes were dull and heavy. His face was terribly emaciated. His clothes hung loosely upon his



His bearers . . . . placed the shell to his lips afresh.

frame. But the shrunken hand which grasped the tiller steered as straight a course as any hand could have done, and the jolly-boat held on to one fixed point. The last remaining scraps of Sandy Carmichael's mind were guiding those skinny fingers to carry out their owner's last wish. This strange sea-fowl ahead; this bird with the great, grey wings; that was the lodestone that was drawing the hapless little boat along.

CHAPTER IV.

How the canoes sailed down from the North: how a sail was spied: and how three white men were rescued.

FROM an island which lay a hundred and twenty miles away to the north, a couple of canoes were sailing to another island, which was distant eighty miles south.

The canoes were dug-outs, hollowed by fire and rude cutting tools from the solid trunk. Each was about thirty feet long, with six feet for greatest beam. Alone, neither would have been able to stand the seas which one assuredly must meet with in so long a voyage, even in the most favourable weather. But each was made to support the other.

I mean that, by means of poles laid across the gunwales, they were lashed securely side by side, about five feet apart, so that a capsize was more or less impossible. There was a platform on the poles—a grating, one might almost call it —of bamboos; so that, if a sea was shipped, it would quickly drain away. And, furthermore, the canoes had been prepared for sea by having a good broad plank sewn on with fibre above the gunwale, so that each had, to use a technical term, abundance of free board.

A mast rose from each canoe, the two heads being joined together. In the triangle thus formed, a sail laboriously woven from coarse fibre was hoisted, and set on boom and yard.

The platform held crew and passengers. There were eighteen men of all ages. Most of them were stark naked, but some bundles of *tappa* cloth showed that during the evening chill they could clothe when they wished to. Happy mortals! clothing was to them for warmth, not decency; for, like Adam before the fall, they were naked, and not an atom ashamed. Indeed, only two of them were clad, and these more as a sign of office than for any other reason.

Their one garment consisted of a yard-wide strip of *tappa* cloth thrown over one shoulder, and wound loosely round the body.

The two men who wore these insigna were chiefs, father and son. The elder was just then sitting in the stern of the starboard canoe, steering. He had no compass before him, and, it being daylight, of course there were no stars visible; yet for all that he held on confidently enough. How he steered I cannot tell; but it is a well-known fact that the aboriginal races of the Pacific Islands were gifted with an instinct, which guided them infallibly across the great sea wastes in their frequent ocean voyages.

The younger man was pacing backwards and forwards over the heaving bamboo deck, apparently exercising himself.

Every time he came forward in his short parade, he stopped for a moment to scan the semicircle of the horizon before him, and then, turning, resumed his walk. The other men were lying and sitting about, chatting or sleeping. There was nothing for them to do.

Suddenly the elder chief spoke.

"Mytto," he said, "old eyes are better than young ones still."

"How's that, father? What do you see, that I don't."

"There, straight ahead. You've passed your eye across it at least six times since it rose above the water's edge."

With his attention thus drawn, Mytto shaded his eye with a hand, and gazed afresh.

"A white speck, father," he said. "Some seafowl, is it?"

"Too far away for that."

"Wait," said the younger man. He cast off his *tappa* robe, and seizing the mast of the weather canoe with hands and knees, swarmed nimbly aloft, and perched himself

on the swaying yard, held on to the apex of the triangles balancing himself on his lurching perch with a true sailor's agility.

"Well?" inquired the steersman.

"It is a canoe," replied Mytto, "yet like no canoe I've ever seen before. She is all visible from here, what there is of her, and that's very little. How men dare put to sea in such a tiny cockleshell, I can't understand."

"Been fishing, perhaps, and got blown off shore," suggested one of the men.

"She's no craft of ours, of that I'm sure," continued Mytto. "Her sail, too, is different in every way—in colour, shape, and hoist—from those we know."

"What men are there on board?" inquired the older chief.

"I can't see. The sail hides them. They are a little to weather of us. But we are holding on to meet one another, and shall soon know."

The newcomer's hull was visible from the deck now, when the lashed canoes rose on the summit of a swell; and Mytto slipped down from aloft, and joined the knot of men below. All were on their feet, gazing eagerly ahead. Almost anything would have been welcome to break the monotony of their voyage.

"There's an old hand at the steering paddle," quoth one. "She's coming at us as straight as an arrow flight."

"And that's crooked if it comes from thy bow," laughed another. "But likely enough she's seen us, and so has a point to make for."

The old chief in the stern heard this last remark, and, to test its truth, bore away a point or two. In a minute the strange craft had put up her helm so as to intersect this new course.

"They have seen us, father," said Mytto.

"I know it, boy. Come now, all of you, get your weapons. 'Tis always well to take a stranger at sea for an enemy till he proves a friend. That may save a surprise."

The men got clubs and fish-bone-tipped lances from the canoes, laid them out in readiness on the deck, and then recommenced their occupation of staring at the craft ahead.

When the two vessels were about a hundred yards apart, rolling sideways over the same swell, the stranger ran slowly up into the wind, her sail flapping and tearing wildly at its sheet. There was a man in the stern, but he had fallen across the tiller, and forcing it to leeward, had brought his cock-boat up head to wind. Presently she fell off again on the other tack; but, as the sheet was made fast to windward, she made but little headway.

The lashed canoes overhauled fast. Clubs and lances were little thought of now. Three forms were visible in the stranger, and those three were to all appearances dead men. A shark was following; and sharks generally knew when they were to have a meal.

Foot by foot the canoe came up astern, and then the old chief skilfully manœuvred alongside.

Mytto sprang on board with a rope's end, which he made fast. He found halyards, which he was accustomed to, and casting them off, ran down the sail. And then he turned to the three occupants. Those lying in the wash on the floor gratings, being nearest, commanded his first attention. He examined each carefully. Both were alive. Then he passed on to the younger stranger in the stern. He was alive too. He moaned when he was touched, but seemed in a better way than his companions.

Mytto took in the situation at once. "Poor fellows, they are perished with thirst, and starving," he said.

Half-a-dozen men dived into the canoes, and half-a-dozen eager hands held forth green cocoa-nuts. Two more of the islanders boarded the boat, and they and Mytto, each taking a patient, poured the sweet juice between their parched and blackened lips, and one by one the sufferers regained conciousness.

(To be continued.)

HOW TO START - - - - - - A LIBRARY.

EVERY household in the United Kingdom worthy of the name, contains at least one book-case with an assortment of volumes, the nature of which is a pretty sure index of the character of the owner. In some cases the husband is responsible for the selection; in other cases the wife takes the initiative, and buys those novels which most takes her fancy.

A great number of men and women feel the absence of good standard works, works that they had taken down from their parents' bookshelves when they were yet unmarried, books like "Grimms' Fairy Tales," "Arabian Nights Entertainment," and "Don Quixote," books which they are always *going* to buy for their own delectation and for that of their offspring, but which they never do. There is always some new and important novel that gets the money they have decided should be spent on one or the other of these books, and so they never find a place in the bookshelf.

Then, again, the price! Works which are likely to have so much thumbing as either one of those mentioned above, must not be bound in paper covers or printed in tiny type. Yet to secure them in acceptable and durable form has hitherto been beyond the means of the ordinary man.

We say "hitherto" advisedly, for it is now possible, as the result of the arrangements which we have made with various publishers, for everyone who is in a position to pay rent for a home at all, to become (for the initial payment of ten shillings) the possessor of not only these three books, but of ninety-seven others of equal value besides!

Such an opportunity as this was never before offered to anyone, and it is only by arranging for the disposal of enormous quantities that we are enabled to supply such a number of books for so nominal a sum of money.

Bound in cloth, the hundred volumes will cost you, first of all, a ten-shilling postal order, and then a monthly payment of twenty shillings for seven months—surely an easy matter for anyone who is in a position to afford even the accommodation for one hundred books!

If you wish to clear off the whole sum at once, you may pay £7 down for those bound in cloth, while for another sixty shillings, the same volumes will be supplied in handsome half-morocco binding.

If a hundred books is beyond your means or ambition, fifty of them may be secured on conditions which appeared in last week's *P.W.*, and which will appear again shortly.

Anyway, whatever you may think for the moment regarding this manner of improving your mind and embellishing your home, I would advise you to drop a postcard to the 100 BEST BOOKS DEPARTMENT, asking for a list of the volumes offered, together with full particulars, and these will be sent you by return of post. If you don't care for them—well no harm is done.

A LITTLE DANGEROUS.—He (designingly): "What a terrible thing it would be if some rascal should marry you for your money."

She (discouragingly): "It would be for him—if I found it out."

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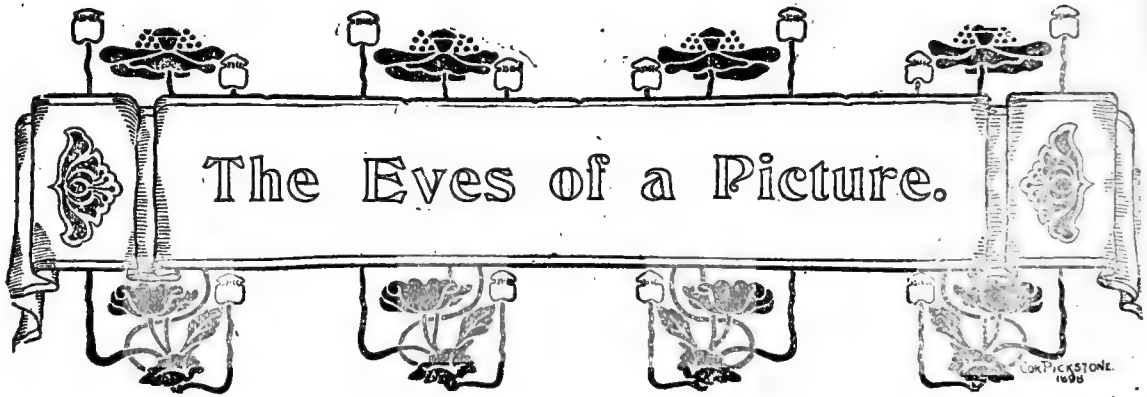
The Eyes of a Picture.



When I became the occupant of the Château Blanc, in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau, I found that my wish for a place of complete seclusion was likely to be realised to the full I was not in a suitable state of mind for society, and I had deliberately given myself three months in which to fight out a certain battle with myself, for which I needed solitude and reflection.

When the old woman who acted as caretaker of the place took me through it on a tour of inspection, there were three things which, in spite of my preoccupation with my own affairs, struck me very forcibly.

The first was the forlorn remnants of the body of a white swan, which must once have been a creature of splendid size and shape. My informant told me that this swan had been a great pet of the former owner of the château, until some accident had killed it; after which it had been stuffed and fastened in its place upon the surface of the little lake under his window. There it was still—what remained of it—a mass of weather-beaten and dirty feathers.

Another thing that compelled my strong attention was a certain picture that hung in the bedroom of the late owner, and which I was informed was his own portrait, painted by himself. This room, by the way, was sinister and mysterious in its effect beyond any I had ever entered. One reason for this was the fact that all the furniture, which was elaborately carved and must once have been of beautiful polish and colour, had been ruthlessly covered with a coat of black paint—the bed, the table, chairs, wardrobe, chest of drawers, and even the great leather easy-chair, which was placed just under the picture facing the opposite wall.

It was a wretched piece of work, that picture, representing a man dressed in some sort of court dress of the last century, and it would have seemed ineffectual to the last degree but for the truly marvellous expression of the eyes, which were fixed on a certain spot in the wall opposite, with an earnestness and intensity which made me feel that there was some hidden significance in this look. The man not only stared at the spot himself, but he compelled me to do the same, to look again and again.

And yet there was nothing to see. The wall was perfectly bare in that place; and covered with a meaningless sort of wall paper which gave no encouragement whatever.

Another thing that I noticed specially, with a feeling of being imperiously directed to do so, was a large rusty key that hung on the wall directly under the picture. When I inquired of the old woman what this key belonged to, she answered that she had never known, but that it had been hung there by the late proprietor and had been undisturbed since his death. That event had occurred many years ago, and it was owing to the provisions of the will left by him that no one had ever occupied the house in the interval. The prescribed time had only just expired, and I was the first person to rent the château, the revenue from which was to go to a nephew who lived abroad.

The sombreness of the black chamber suited my frame of mind, and I decided on taking it for my room. Besides this, the picture, the key, and the white swan all interested me, and as it was the first time that an outside interest had made any headway against the melancholy of my own thoughts, these objects, far from cheerful as they were in themselves, afforded a grateful diversion.

So continually did I wonder why the picture looked always, and could compel me to look, at that one spot, and why the key had been hung in that place and kept its position so many years undisturbed, as if some ghostly guardian watched over it, and why, ever and always, the old white swan compelled me, as if by some irresistible power, to connect it with these other things, that I kept myself awake at night, weaving all sorts of stories concerning these objects, and spent half my days in looking from the picture to the wall, and back again to the key, and then out of the window at the battered effigy of a noble bird beneath it, until the confusion of mind thus produced seemed likely to drive me crazy.

I expended all the ingenuity of which I was master in questioning the old woman, who had lived here in the time of the former owner, but the satisfaction of my curiosity in that direction was rather meagre.

She told me that her former master had had a wife whom he adored, fair as an angel, and gifted with a divinely beautiful voice such as none had ever heard, before or since. This young wife had been snatched from him by a sudden and frightful death. The fever which seized her had been so contagious, the woman said, that every one had fled the premises, except one woman servant and the master himself. These, with the help of the doctor, had nursed the young wife through her brief illness until its end.

My informant had heard it said that the circumstances of her death were very peculiar—that in her delirium, on the very last night of her illness, those who had

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ventured to linger about the premises had heard her singing more gloriously than ever in her life; that it had reminded them of the great white swan, which but the night before had sung its last sweet song on the lake, in the moonlight, and had been found dead in the morning.

The woman who had remained to help the master in his last sad ministrations to his dying and dead wife had gone away the day after the funeral, and had never been heard of since.

The funeral, in the quaint old church but a few paces from the house, had been, from the woman's account, melancholy enough. Scarcely anyone dared to come to it, so malignant had been this fever, and it was feared that the few men who were willing to act as bearers would not be equal to the task; but the poor lady had been light and fairy-like in figure, and so wasted was she from this consuming fever, that the bearers declared that her weight was scarcely more than that of an empty coffin.

The woman further said that, as the small funeral cortège was leaving the church, it had surprised everyone to see the husband, who was directly behind the coffin, pause directly under a statue of the Virgin, and single out from the great bunch of ribbons which hung there, the long strip which his young wife had placed there on the day of her marriage to him, less than a year before. It was an old custom connected with this church. Every girl married there had conformed to it, and some of the ribbons were yellow with time and almost dropping to pieces.

The longest and freshest bit of all had been put there by the beautiful young creature now lying dead in the flower of her youth and loveliness.

No one ever knew, the woman went on to say, how the master spent his days after the funeral was over. He had forbidden every servant to return, and turned a deaf ear to the rings and knocks of visitors. Months had passed, and no one held speech with him. They knew he was alive, because people who had looked through the palings had seen him walking in the garden, and one person reported having seen him carry from the house the stuffed body of the great swan and fasten it in its place on the lake, where it could be plainly seen from his window. He must have embalmed or stuffed it himself, the old woman said, for he was known to have remarkable knowledge and skill in such strange arts.

As was inevitable, after hearing all this, my interest in the picture, swan, and the key, deepened sensibly. There was certainly a touch of the supernatural about these things for me. I had only to stand near the spot on which the eyes of the picture were fastened to experience the strangest, the most overwhelmingly significant sensations I had ever known.

The spot was haunted by a presence, it seemed to me, and as often as I stood there I could feel my heart throb and cease throbbing, my breath pant and cease panting, my flesh turn cold and moist with consciousness and apprehension.

I tried to account for all this on natural grounds, but I found it was quite impossible to do so.

One day—it was the 19th of August—a hot, sultry, indescribably gloomy day, when the heavy clouds that lowered seemed only to darken the whole earth without giving forth one drop of moisture, the old woman came to my room and chanced to mention that it was the time of the death of the young mistress of the Château Blanc.

She had died, it appeared, just at midnight, between the 19th and 20th of August. After giving me this information, she said good-evening and left me to the reflections which it aroused.

I can scarcely call them reflections. They took the form, rather, of a sort of compulsion that was laid upon me to obey a certain force by which I felt myself suddenly dominated.

It was the picture that did it; this was certain, for, as often as I faltered, one look into that insistent, commanding, coercing face compelled me to go on. In obedience to its bidding, I did as follows:—

I went to an old desk in the room, and took from it some simple carpenter's tools, with which I deliberately cut through, first, the wall-papering, and then a thin boarding, which covered all the space between a door and window opposite the picture.

When this was done I saw—I cannot say whether most to my satisfaction or my horror—that I stood in front of a door—a regular, ordinary door, with panels, hinges, and, more than all, a keyhole. I glanced at the picture. It seemed to me that the canvas positively lived with expression.

The eyes commanded me to get the rusty key. I took it, fitted it in the lock, in which it turned with difficulty, and then, with my heart almost choking me with its throbs, my knees shaking under me, my body covered with a cold sweat, and my tongue dry in my mouth, I opened the door.

As it creaked on its rusty hinges, I saw, by the light of the candle which I held in my hand, a mass of cobwebs, heavily weighted with the dust of years, and, through these, a woman's figure.

It was clad—for I obeyed the eyes, which commanded me to examine it, though my heart was cold with terror—in what I made out to be a white silk gown, above which was the face, withered and awfully livid, as I had heard that the faces of the embalmed appear years after death. Still, it was recognisable as a real human face, and was surrounded by masses of yellow hair, which, even through the dust and cobwebs, gleamed with the brightness of gold.

The hands held something in their shrunken fingers—a white ribbon, with the date of her marriage and death upon it, her husband's name and her own, and these words, which, under the compelling eyes of the picture, I laboriously studied out:—

I HAVE been able to keep you near me, even in death. I have never been separated from you, or from what once was you to me. But when death shall come to me you will have no power over my body, and they will take me from you. That I am unable to help. I think only of this; you cannot suffer for it, since you have so long ceased to be, and by that time my suffering also will be over. I shall put my spirit into the eyes of my picture, which will watch over you still.

I looked from the paper to the picture. It seemed dull and inexpressive—mere canvas and paint. The power of the eyes was gone. Their spell over me was broken.

Suddenly I felt within me a long-absent yearning for human companionship—for life and love. I had come to this place impelled by a morbid and unhealthy desire for solitude, and my experiences here made me more morbid and unhealthy still. They had culminated now in this awful revelation of disappointment and death, which threw into brilliant contrast the bright possibilities which still remained to me, and I resolved to go back into the world and do my best to deserve and win these

EDNA WOODFORD.

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

VII.—Filling a Foreign Order.

"I SAY, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, as he finished reading a letter he had just received, "my brother out in Canada wants me to buy a razor strop and a suitable present for a young lady, and send them to him."

"I didn't know that a razor strop was a suitable present for a young lady," replied Mrs. Timmins, who was busy, and caught the remark imperfectly.

"It would be a suitable present for some married women; it would sharpen 'em up!" retorted Mr. Timmins. "Who said anything about a razor strop and a young lady? What I observed was that my brother in Canada wants me to send him a razor strop and a suitable present for a young lady. Now, I can get the strop, but I don't understand what kind of a present he wants."

"Let me see," mused Mrs. Timmins, her shopping instincts rising to the surface. "Does he say what kind of a young lady she is?"

"No, he doesn't!" roared Mr. Timmins. "He leaves something to the imagination of the reader. I suppose she's got legs and arms, because if she hadn't he would probably have mentioned it. What he wants is a present for an average woman; now, what can we get for her?"

"If I knew whether she was a blonde or a brunette, I could tell better what she would like," replied Mrs. Timmins, who, like the rest of her sex, always associates a woman with the colour that becomes her best. "Do you suppose he means something for her to wear, or some ornament for her house? You see I don't know whether she keeps house or lives at home."

"What difference does that make?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "She's probably a human being; but we will suppose she roosts in a tree. Does that help you? Can you think of something useful for a female who lives in a tree, and hops with light-hearted skips from bough to bough like a blessed crow?"

"You might get her a toilet set," suggested Mrs. Timmins, taking refuge in a woman's one idea of an appropriate present for another woman.

"She doesn't want a toilet set," snorted Mr. Timmins, "any more'n she wants the chicken pox. Think of something that is pretty, and at the same time that she can use. Now think!"

"How would one of those new painted porcelain flower-pots do?" ventured Mrs. Timmins.

"That's it!" howled Mr. Timmins; "a flower-pot with a beastly saucer under it to catch the water till it overflows on the carpet! That's your idea! One with broken-legged spiders painted on the outside and a hole in the bottom, so she can use it for a spyglass! That's the idea! A six-shilling flower-pot for a threepenny rose bush with the blind staggers and a touch of the pip! Where's the pot? Fetch the highly-seasoned flower-pot!"

And Mr. Timmins leant back in his chair and glared at his wife.

"I tell you what will do, my dear," said Mrs. Timmins, approaching the next suggestion cautiously. "Why not send an album?"

"You mean one of those books for a lot of idiots to wish they were dead in?" asked Mr. Timmins suspiciously.

"No," replied Mrs. Timmins, "a photographic album."

"Don't want it," sniffed Mr. Timmins contemptuously. "You mean that sort of a thing that a girl always brings out after tea and says: 'That's ma, and that's pa, and that's aunt Vi and her little boy, and that's Uncle Simon, and that's Aunt Flo, and that's Uncle John, and that's my niece Nellie, isn't she sweet? And that's a dog we used to own, and I don't know who that is, and that's Clara Morris!'

"Don't want it!" And Mr Timmins's voice rose to steam-whistle pitch.

"Do you suppose I'm going to inflict a suffering world with a bookful of old stagers that all look alike and have been in every album since Adam began to wear trousers? Can't ye think of something sensible?"

"Wouldn't half-a-dozen forks be nice?" faltered Mrs. Timmins, almost at her wits' ends.

"Just the thing!" gasped Mr. Timmins. "Half a dozen pitchforks and a ton of hay. Then you might throw in a hen coop and a rat climbing over the back paling. You've got ideas about such things! All you want is a white beard and a chimney to be Father Christmas! With your intelligence on these subjects you only need a glass front and a glue pot to be a toy shop! I'm going to buy this present myself!" and Mr. Timmins shot out of the house and tore down the street with his head sunk into his shoulders and his fists in his pockets.

In an hour he returned all grins and tossed a parcel in his wife's lap.

"Now, my dear, what do you think of that?" he asked cheerfully.

Mrs. Timmins opened the parcel and disclosed a huge crimson handkerchief that would have made a tabernacle tent for a camp meeting.

"How did you come to think of it?" she asked, holding it up admiringly.

"Why," replied Mr. Timmins, "he said in the letter if I couldn't think of anything else to get a handsome handkerchief. Here it is," and Mr. Timmins drew out the letter triumphantly.

"But he doesn't say handkerchief; he says a nice handkerchief-case! Here's the case on the next line," said Mrs. Timmins mildly, planting her thumb on the supplemental word.

"Bless the man!" he replied. "Why doesn't he write plain? Why didn't you tell me before what he wanted? What did you let me break my neck to get this flag for when he wanted a box? If I didn't have any more sense than you've got I'd put broken glass on my head and let myself out for the back wall of a lunatic asylum!"

And Mr. Timmins dived into his chair, and snored lustily until bed time.

"Anyhow," thought Mrs. Timmins as she put the handkerchief away, "I can find out where he bought it, and exchange it for things for the baby."

And Mrs. Timmins fired another charge of ipecacuanha into the infant, hushing its startled cries, as Mr. Timmins, fast asleep, slid out of his chair like a load of coal.

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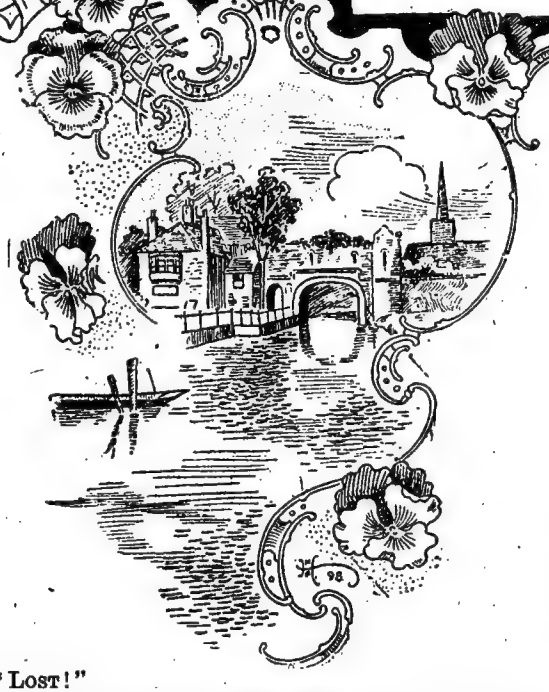
The Toss of a Coin.



"Lost!"

The young man spoke quietly, but there was a somewhat hopeless ring in his voice. He leant back in his chair and looked at the man sitting opposite him.

"Since I have lost everything," he continued, "our play must now cease. You have won from me all I possess. Are you not satisfied?"

"Not quite," replied the other. He hesitated a moment, then continued: "It is true that I have won all your money and your property, but there is still something left to you which I would fain win."

Rupert Gainsford glanced at him inquiringly. The two men were seated in a spacious room, one of the suite set apart for Rupert's use in the Gainsford mansion whenever he chose to visit his uncle. He was a young fellow of about twenty-four years of age; his companion was Nicholas Harley, an older man, and one whose name sounded ill in the ears of the better class of the aristocracy of London as it was in the latter days of the reign of His Most Gracious Majesty, George III.

Owing to a service which he had accidentally been able to render Sir Henry Gainsford, Harley was an occasional visitor at Gainsford House. But of late his visits had been more frequent, and he had endeavoured to place himself on very friendly terms with the nephew and heir.

On this particular evening, Nicholas Harley had steadily urged Rupert to play cards with him in order to regain some of the money which he had lost during the previous few days. Rupert Gainsford was scarcely better than many of the young gallants of his time, and of late Nicholas had seemed to gain considerable ascendancy over him, with the result that his style of living had not improved. They had retired to this room rather early in the evening and had continued their play, while Sir Henry and his daughter Dorothy had gone earlier than usual to their own apartments.

All through the two hours' play luck had apparently been against Rupert. Little by little he had lost his money and his possessions, until finally he had thrown down the cards at the end of a game with the exclamation at the beginning of this story.

Nicholas Harley's remark that there was still something left to play for, excited Rupert's curiosity.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "I have lost everything."

"Listen," replied Nicholas. "You are betrothed to your cousin, Mistress Dorothy. I propose that we shall regard her as the stake for a fresh game and——"

"How dare you mention her so lightly!" cried Rupert angrily, as he pushed back his chair and sprang to his feet.

"Tut, tut, man!" said Harley as quietly as though the other had made no movement. "Sit down and listen to what I have to say. You are but ill-acquainted with me if you think I would speak lightly of your cousin."

Rupert sank back into the chair and waited for the other to continue. It struck him that there was an unusual ring of sincerity in the man's voice as he uttered the last words, and his anger cooled a little.

"You are betrothed to your cousin," continued Nicholas, "and the marriage has been planned, as I understand, ever since you were children. I know that you care but little, if at all, for your cousin in the way that a man should care for the woman who is to be his wife. With you, as with men generally, marriage is not a love affair, but a mere matter of course, the only conditions being that your bride shall be of equal rank at least, and that she shall have sufficient personal attractions to grace your household. Beyond that, you care nothing. Is not that true?"

"And presuming that it is true?" queried Rupert, ignoring the question.

"I desire to wed Mistress Dorothy," Harley went on, "and——"

But he was interrupted by a laugh from Rupert Gainsford.

"*You!*" sneered the young fellow. "The only recommendation you have is riches which have come into your possession—well, suddenly. You are not of noble family and your good looks—but I will not harass your feelings by referring to them!"

Although Harley raged inwardly under this criticism, he remained outwardly cool. It was his policy to be conciliatory, and in his determination he never allowed anything to spoil the attainment of his object.

"I grant," he said, "that I cannot boast of so comely an appearance or of such descent as yourself, but I can offer to your cousin that which you cannot—I can offer her love. You think that I stand but little chance of winning her affection, but I tell you that you do not understand the power of a man's love over a woman. That love will in time be returned by her, however improbable it may seem to you. It is in woman's nature to look for love, and when she sees that she is the object of a man's deep and undivided affection, her soul unconsciously goes out to him; the man's love has broken down all barriers, she disregards all else, and she loves him!"

He stopped abruptly, as though his feelings overcame him.

"Still, you don't tell me why you proposed her as the stake for a fresh game," remarked Rupert, moved by Harley's words and by the suppressed emotion evident in his voice. He still resented the proposal, but his curiosity and interest were aroused.

"While you are in the way," returned Harley, "I stand no chance of winning Mistress Dorothy. You may be as poor as a church mouse, but your uncle has set his heart upon the marriage."

"I *am* out of the way, since I have nothing now to offer her," replied Rupert. "I could not wed her in my present position, and I would not accept my uncle's charity. When he dies, I am heir to his property, but I have honour enough not to accept it now, although my kind-hearted uncle would give me all he possesses. And he is good for another twenty years yet—Heaven bless him! No, I have nothing to live for, and will seek death on the field in Spain or elsewhere."

"No, you will be in my way as long as you live—whether you be poor or rich," said Harley firmly. "With you dead, I could hope to gain Mistress Dorothy's hand. My love and Sir Henry's gratitude will help me. This is the stake I propose. You have told me that life is useless to you. I will put all that I have won from you against your life—that is: If you win the game you will re-enter into all your possessions; if you lose you will undertake to commit suicide within forty-eight hours and leave the way open to me."

It was a strange proposal, and Harley waited with ill-concealed anxiety for Rupert's reply. Rupert was in a frame of mind admirably adapted for the attainment of his companion's object; he was dejected and annoyed at his foolishness in allowing himself to be drawn into the excitement of gambling to the extent of utterly ruining himself and spoiling a life that offered such bright prospects. He could not now bear to face his cousin and his uncle and to show himself in the light of a profligate, and his companion's proposal offered just the chance of retrieving himself.

If he lost, what did it matter that he was bound to commit suicide? He might as well end his career that way and at once, as go off and die in battle or of fever in some foreign country. There was something else—a feeling that was new to him; he had lost Dorothy! And here was a chance of winning her back.

"I accept!" he cried impulsively. "Let us try again and see if fortune will favour you to the end, or whether she will turn upon you like the fickle jade she is said to be. At any rate, she has been steadfast in her attitude towards me."

Nicholas Harley gathered up the cards with a deep breath and prepared to shuffle them, but Gainsford stopped him.

"No more of those cards," he said decisively. "I have had enough of them. We will decide this stake by a throw of the dice, and finish quickly."

"No," objected Harley. "I play not with dice. Let us decide this either by the cards or, as you wish to settle it quickly, by the toss of a coin. I will place the coin in this box, shake it up, toss it up to the ceiling and allow it to fall on the ground. If the head be uppermost, I win. If it be tails, the stake is yours. I will toss it up from this box, because it is easy for a man to influence the result if he places the coin this or that way up and spins it from his forefinger and thumb. Do you agree to that?"

"So be it!" returned Gainsford. "You must furnish the coin, for I doubt whether I have one to offer—at least, not a worthy one. It is a big stake; a wife for you, or life and a wife for me."

"Oh, I have one," replied Harley rather quickly, slipping his hand into his pocket and dropping a silver piece into the box.

He shook the box vigorously, and then gave it a jerk which sent the coin spinning into the air.

There was a moment's breathless silence as the men saw the coin descending, and each bent eagerly as it touched the floor and rolled against the leg of the table.

"Heads!" cried Harley triumphantly.

Rupert glared at the coin, then with a stifled groan returned to his seat. The other picked up the coin quickly to replace it in his pocket; but in his excitement he let it slip to the carpeted floor without noticing it.

It was all over, and he was bound in honour to take his own life within forty-eight hours. Rupert sat motionless in the chair, scarcely conscious of what was passing. He saw, as in the distance, the figure of his companion going towards the door, and a faint sound of a parting greeting smote upon his ear. He had a vague feeling that Harley was leaving the house instead of passing the night there, as he had been invited to do. When at last he did rouse himself, the light of the day was peeping in through his blinds and curtains.

He got up and walked about the room. Should he put an end to his life there, or should he leave the house at once and destroy himself in some quiet spot outside London? His dull eyes wandered over the carpet, and suddenly rested upon something that glittered in the morning light. Mechanically he picked it up, and as he recognised the silver piece which had decided his fate, he put it into the pocket on the left of his waistcoat.

"Harley, at least, will recognise me by that, I expect," he muttered with a bitter smile. "Yes," he went on, after a pause, "I will put an end to my wretched existence here, I cannot live another half-hour in this torment!"

He walked into the inner room and took from its case a rather clumsy pistol. Surveying it meditatively, he slowly returned to the outer room.

"This will be quicker than a knife," he said half aloud. "Where shall the bullet go? Into my heart, or through my stupid head? Into my heart, I think, since it is incapable of love, if Harley is correct."

He held the pistol within three or four inches of his left breast and prepared to pull the trigger. He looked round hastily and then fired, his hand trembling slightly as he did so. He felt the concussion, which caused him to stagger a step, and he heard a smash as the bullet crashed through the looking-glass on the chimney-piece at his side.

For a moment he could not understand what had happened. He had fired at his heart, as he thought, and had felt the bullet strike him, yet here he was unharmed save for a pain in his left arm. He was gazing in a dull manner at the still smoking pistol when the door of the room was pushed open and a beautiful girl of twenty, whose face betokened great alarm, rushed into the apartment.

"Oh, Rupert, what is it!" she asked in terrified accents.

Then catching sight of the smoking pistol she recoiled in horror.

"Rupert! Rupert! What does it mean?" she asked again.

But the guilty look upon his haggard face was sufficient answer for her. Instinctively she realised what had taken place, and staggering to the chair occupied on the previous night by Harley she sank into it, buried her face in her hands and wept.

The noise of hurried footsteps outside recalled Rupert to himself, and he hastened to the door in time to prevent the entry of the affrighted servants, whom he assured that his pistol had gone off by accident as he was handling it. Closing the door again he walked slowly back to where his cousin was still sitting, and tried to calm her with tender words, uttered in a shamed and hesitating manner.

"What does it mean?" she repeated, rising and facing him with tears still in her eyes. "Why have you been so wicked as to make an attempt upon your life?"

Slowly and in a shame-faced manner, although he tried to appear unconcerned and even haughty, Rupert explained the cause of his action. As he spoke, although he did not mention the exact reason of the last act of the previous evening's gambling, a flush overspread Dorothy's cheeks and was in turn reflected on his own.

"I have lost everything," he said, "and as life now is worthless to me I decided to be rid of it. What have I to live for?"

Dorothy essayed to speak, but her words were inaudible. She cast a tell-tale glance at him and her eyes drooped, while the flush deepened on her cheeks. But Rupert misunderstood the reason of her agitation.

"Yes," he said bitterly. "It is true, I have nothing to live for now. Even you turn from me as I knew you would."

"Rupert! Do not speak so cruelly!" cried Dorothy, raising her eyes to his and clasping her hands. "Oh, why will you force me to speak these words—why will you force me to tell you that I want you to live for my sake, that I—I—love you, Rupert?" Then overcome by her emotion, and her cheeks burning with shame, she would have fallen back into the chair had not her cousin, with a wild impulse, his heart stirred by a sensation that was new to him, clasped her in his arms and pressed her passionately to his breast.

For a brief space they remained thus lost in ecstasy, but it was not long ere memory returned to Rupert and he gently pushed her from him.

"It's too late, Dorothy!" he cried passionately. "I have pledged my word, and whatever I am I will not fail to keep that. Had Fortune favoured me, that pledge would now have been kept, but something—how could it have happened? Why did not the bullet pierce my heart as I had intended?"

His hand wandered to his left side as if seeking some explanation, and he felt the coin which he had placed in his pocket. The truth flashed across his mind at the contact, and he drew forth the silver piece and held it towards Dorothy.

"This is the coin by which I lost my life, and yet it has been instrumental in saving it this morning. I cannot do better than give it to you, Dorothy, and ask you to keep it in memory of me. For the accident of this morning cannot cancel a gentleman's word of honour."

He handed it to her, and she took it mechanically, shuddering as she touched it. As she raised it from his hand she turned it, and then uttered an exclamation.

"What a strange coin, Rupert!" she cried. "How could you decide a bet with such a one as this? It has two heads—it is alike both sides."

Rupert started and quickly took the coin from her hand.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it *is* a strange coin. I will communicate with Harley about this. And now, Dorothy, dear, go back to your room and leave me. I must be alone."

Dorothy hesitated and placed her hand upon his arm.

"I cannot go unless you will promise me—not to——"

"I promise you very willingly, my sweet Dorothy," answered Rupert, as he took her in his arms and kissed her again. "Be not afraid for me now, for this piece of money has brought life, a new life, for Rupert Gainsford. All will be well for us yet."

She left the room, and Rupert seated himself at the table and wrote in clumsy style, for his hand was not experienced in the use of the pen, a short letter to Nicholas Harley. He was about to sign it, hesitating whether to add anything more, when he noticed on the table one of the cards, which Harley had left behind—for it was his own pack. The card was half hidden by a wine-bottle which had been set upon it.

Rupert took it up and examined it. A peculiar expression flitted across his face, and he continued his letter. When finished, it read as follows:

"I am returning to you a silver piece which you dropped here by accident instead of replacing it in your pocket at the close of last night's play. It is a curious coin, and one which no doubt has great value in your eyes. In return for its restoration I require you to cancel all my obligations to you. As I have a witness of this transaction, it will be useless for you to dispute it. On hearing from you, I will also return one of the pack of cards belonging to you, with which we played last night. It is a pity that such a pack should be spoilt by the loss of one card, for I notice that this one has a peculiar marking on the back, which may account for the good fortune which has attended you during the past few days. Perhaps it is a gambler's superstition which induces you to play with your own cards!"

G. MERRIAM.

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AMONG all the fatalities with which fate has crossed the lives of men, there was never one more strange than that which befell George Weston in the month of August, A.D. 1893.

He was the junior member of the firm of Hamlin and Weston, of Wellington, New Zealand, and was going home to dinner, in good spirits, about five o'clock in the afternoon.

His firm was negotiating for the purchase of a tract of timber growing some four hundred miles away, and he was to start on the following morning on a tour of inspection, which would take several weeks. He loved the life of the woods, and anticipated good sport, as well as a profitable business journey.

Near the telephone building in Clifford Street he was stopped by an old man with a long grey beard, the face of a Greek philosopher, and large eyes as calm and clear as those of a toad. He was a foreigner of some kind, and his speech was a queer jumble of words, that sounded as though he had learnt the language from the dictionary. He pointed his long finger at Weston's face, and called his attention to a twitching of the muscles of the cheek, which recurred at intervals, and in an impressive manner, pronounced this to be incipient paralysis, sure to develop with fatal result, unless arrested in time. The cure, certain and speedy, was contained in the small phial which he placed in Weston's hand.

"My name and address," said he, "are on the scroll about the phial, and when success is assured, with your sense of justice I leave my compensation to you."

With a bow he was gone, disappearing round the corner of the street.

Now, the one persistent annoyance of Weston's life was this spasmodic contraction of his facial muscles. It had been present ever since he could remember, and though causing him no real inconvenience it had always worried him. It was the restiveness and irritation which men of perfect health and robust physique always feel at some trifling blemish, and he had tried all manner of means to get rid of it.

He had tired of regular medical advisers, who made light of the matter, and bravely encountered the good-natured ridicule of his friends, and had taken to nostrums and patent medicines, and swallowed unlimited doses of infallible remedies, with no other result than the occasional derangement of his powerful digestion.

The peculiarly venerable and striking appearance of the stranger impressed him that, although at first he had no thought of using this new specific, the possibility of his doing so was in his mind when he reached home.

Mrs. Weston was a matter-of-fact woman, who believed in all things respectable and orthodox, and had no faith in anything else; and she was not in the least impressed by her husband's eloquent description of the venerable and majestic appearance of the stranger, but unhesitatingly pronounced him a swindling quack, and advised her husband to have nothing to do with his medicine, which was quite likely to prove to be some slow poison, that would either kill him, or give him some incurable drug habit.

Thus rebuffed, Weston dropped the subject, and went about his preparations for the morrow's journey.

As the train was to leave very early in the morning, it was arranged that he should occupy their spare bedroom downstairs, so that he might go out without disturbing his family at an unearthly hour.

Alone in his room, after bidding his wife good-bye, Weston brought out the phial and took off the paper that was wrapped round it. It was an odd name on it, which added to the impression its owner had already made upon him.

"Iconax Bagristus, M.D., Ph.D." The directions were simple: "Half-an-ounce. Take whole on retiring." The contents of the phial were colourless, and an application of the tongue proved them to be tasteless.

After a moment's hesitation, he drank it at a single swallow, put the empty phial and paper on the dressing-table, and went to bed.

He fell asleep almost immediately, and so profound was his slumber that, when aroused by the rattle of the alarm clock, he sprang to the floor with a feeling of being late. He seemed to have slept days instead of hours. He dressed quickly, and noiselessly left the house; and, as he inhaled the fresh air of early morning, he felt strangely vigorous and young, and had a schoolboy's impulse to break into a run as he went down the silent street.

That evening he arrived at a town on the coast,

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whence, on the following day, he was to take passage on a small steamer that made weekly trips to fishing stations a hundred miles, or thereabouts, farther along the coast.

On reaching the end of his first day's journey, Weston found that the boat left on her day trip earlier than he supposed, in fact, would pull out about ten o'clock the next morning, which left him but short time to make his necessary preparations—which consisted in laying in a stock of provisions, and securing the services of a couple of men as assistants. For this reason, it came about that he could only write a brief note to his wife, announcing his safe arrival, and which in his hurry he forgot to post, and carried off with him to the woods.

He left the steamer at the mouth of a small river, some thirty miles from his destination, and with his guides and stores, made his way a day's journey up stream, where they pitched their camp.

Here, for the next two weeks, Weston lived the life of a wild Indian, and no Indian ever roamed the woods in a more savage state of health and spirits. He surprised himself, and tired out his tough companions, by his strength and endurance.

There were some features of his physical condition so marked as to be rather startling. The facial convulsions had wholly disappeared, which was a great relief to his mind. Then there were changes in the matter of his taste for various articles of food—a decided disinclination for many little luxuries and knick-knacks for which he had formerly had a liking—and a general tendency of his appetite in the direction of plain articles of diet. He had been a smoker for years, but now discovered that his taste for tobacco was gone.

All this was very well, but there were some other things that seemed uncanny, and nearly gave him a turn when he first noticed them.

Like everybody else, he had various scars on his person, tokens of the scratches, cuts, and bruises he had received in the chance medley of life. These had all disappeared. Even the anchor that he had, when a boy, paid a sailor to tattoo on his arm was gone! His body was as free from blemish as that of a new born baby.

And there was something else he had noticed shortly after leaving home. He had a ring with a ruby setting that his partner Hamlin had given him the day he was twenty-one—when he became a member of the firm of Hamlin and Weston. It fitted easily at the time, but his hands had grown since then, and for several years the ring had been a fixture; and yet it was gone! And what added to his surprise, was that there was no trace or mark on his finger to show that it had ever been there!

But his high spirits easily dispelled all unpleasant feelings caused by these outer occurrences, and the enjoyment of his daily life was but little disturbed by them.

The days passed swiftly, and in two weeks his work was done, and he returned to the steamer and again took passage; and the first thing he did when he landed from her was to go to the post office, where he met with a great disappointment.

"Nothing," said the clerk, after shuffling a pile of letters.

This was so unaccountable, that Weston was sure there was a mistake, and asked the clerk to look again, and that official, being good-natured, did look again, and very carefully, but with the same result.

Now, by pre-arrangement, there should have been letters from his partner about this very business in hand, and it had seemed certain that there would at least be half-a-dozen from his wife, who it will be remembered had heard nothing from him since he left home.

It was all so unexpected that Weston had a vague idea that there had been some kind of cataclysm in his native city that had suspended ordinary pursuits and avocations. To ease his mind he bought a paper, which was of the issue of the day before, and the first thing he saw was a heading in big capitals, and under that something which threw some light on the matter.

COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.

Our readers have not forgotten the recent death of Mr. George Weston, of the well-known firm of Hamlin and Weston, and the facts that came out at the inquest, resulting in the arrest of Dr. Iconax Bagristus, a quack doctor, of Johnson Avenue, charged with the murder of Mr. Weston.

The case came up for hearing yesterday, and the doctor was committed for trial. The case will be in the list for the next Sessions, which begins next week; it may, however, be postponed.

Weston gave a long whistle.

"Well, here's food for thought! Charged with the murder of Mr. George Weston! Facts which came out at the inquest! How the dickens could they hold an inquest without the body?"

But however mystifying all this, it was evident that the same cause that had put Dr. Bagristus in legal jeopardy, had interfered with Weston's correspondence, and he was not long in deciding that the sooner he appeared at home the better it would be for all concerned.

He looked at the time tables, and he found that the first train for him would leave at ten o' clock in the evening. He then hunted up the back numbers of the papers to learn what he could of the origin of this mystery. He found the starting point in the evening paper of the day he left home; and if there was a trace of amusement in his first impressions, it vanished when he read the big headlines that now made his eyes open widely and almost stopped his breath.

This is what he read:

ANOTHER MYSTERY.

SUDDEN DEATH OF MR. GEORGE WESTON.

Then followed a column of details, from which it appeared that Mrs. Weston, on going to her husband's room in the morning, had found him dead in bed, and the empty phial on the dressing-table. Full particulars of the situation of the room—his reasons for occupying it that night—the position and appearance of the body—his conversation with his wife about the medicine, etc., were given with the customary elaboration of detail, and left Weston nothing to learn concerning what was happening in his house while he was being whirled away from it on that eventful day.

Had he possessed only ordinary physical and mental stamina, he would have fainted, so sudden and powerful was the shock he experienced. As it was, the room seemed whirling round and his chair sinking under him.

What a weight oppressed him! Was he himself? Yes, he could not doubt that, but who, or what, was it his wife found dead in bed? What monstrous thing had happened?

For a time he sat listless and passive, wondering, but resigned to what should come next. This state soon passed away, and he began to feel more like himself, but burning with impatience to get home and grapple with this shadowy, nameless thing of evil. But he could

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do nothing to hurry his departure, and he judged it useless to telegraph; so, schooling himself to patience, he looked over the papers of later dates for the further development of the case.

He was soon in possession of all the facts, and while his wonder was not lessened, he read what followed with composure.

In the next paper he found an account of the inquest. There was a post-mortem, and the eminent medical gentlemen who made it testified to the appearance of the body. There were indications of convulsions, the cause of which they were not prepared to specify, but which would doubtless appear when the chemist had finished his analysis. Pending the investigation, the inquest was adjourned.

Three days later was an account of the funeral, and if Weston had any post-mortem vanity it was fully gratified. The next issue told of the reassembling of the coroner's jury, and the report of the chemical experts, which sounded indefinite, and led one to surmise that the scientific gentlemen were non-plussed; and the gentlemen of the jury were evidently of that way of thinking, for they rendered a verdict of death from unknown causes.

This gave Weston a very complete history of his case, and he could think of but one plausible explanation—and that was preposterous and utterly absurd—that some tramp had entered his house after he left, and died suddenly, and the body had been mistaken for his.

But speculation was useless; all he could do was to wait.

The next evening he alighted at the well-known station. He had learnt from one of the papers that his wife and children had gone home to her father; but he decided that before following her he would see his partner, who was a bachelor and lived in rooms connected with their office; and there Weston found him alone, which was what he wanted.

Hamlin was a theosophist, and held to all sorts of occultism; but no matter what one's theoretical belief may be, no living man who had just buried his dead friend can, with composure, see that friend walk into his room with a travelling bag in his hand, and hear his hail of:

"Well, how are you, old fellow?"

Hamlin was reading, and when he heard the voice he gave a sudden start and turned half round to look at his visitor. There was another start, and a quick drawing of the breath, as Weston came nearer and stood looking down at him. At this, Hamlin passed his hand over his face and got up.

"I beg your pardon, but I did not hear you knock, and you startled me—you so much resemble—another person."

At this Weston broke out laughing.

"Well, John, this is good; but I feel rather serious about it on a count of Kate; she is in trouble, and I want to go to her as soon as possible—to-night if I can get a train."

And then, as Hamlin was silent, and looking at him strangely:

"Come! We'll have the fun later—just now I am feeling very anxious about Kate."

"I think," said Hamlin, speaking very slowly, "there is a mistake——"

"I should say there was a mistake!" broke in Weston. "A very big mistake; and how in the name of bedlam all you people—even you and Kate—could make such a blunder passes my understanding."

"May I inquire, sir, what you are talking about, and who you are, and what you want?"

There was a shade of irritability in Hamlin's voice, and Weston's face assumed a look of surprise.

"Who am I? Well, I think you and I ought to know each other by this time!"

"Look here!" said Hamlin in a sharp tone. "I don't know who you are, nor what your object may be in coming here. Your resemblance to my late partner is so remarkable that I was startled when you came into the room; but I wish to say plainly that if you purpose to make that resemblance the basis of any stupid joke, it is in very bad taste. If you have any other object, you will oblige me by stating it, or else go about your business."

At this Weston gave a cry and sank into a chair. A new and alarming view of his case was dawning on him. Hitherto he had supposed that he had only to show himself, to be recognised and received. He was seized with dread, and a fear came upon him that he had lost his place in the human family; and as he thought of his family he gave another cry, and stretched out his shaking hands towards his partner.

"For Heaven's sake, John, don't say that you don't know me! Don't say that I am not your old friend, George Weston!"

The relations between these two men were closer than those of ordinary business associates. Hamlin was fifteen years Weston's senior, and had been an elder brother to him all his life.

There is a Freemasonry in human love: certain undefinable gestures—inflexions of the voice—glances of the eye, and other signs that cannot be simulated; and as Weston sat there, with his outstretched quivering hands, there was in his face the old coaxing pleading look that Hamlin knew, and that he had seen and felt so many, many years ago, when the orphan boy he loved had made some appeal from his judgment to his affection. And now this familiar look penetrated his armour of common-sense and went to his heart.

"Hang it all! I don't know what to do, nor what to think! A week ago I buried my friend and brother, George Weston; and to-night he apparently comes back to me in life and health! Am I dreaming? Or out of my senses? Speak to me, George—for I can't help calling you so—tell me something, can't you?"

"Now you give me hope," said Weston with a great sob of relief. "I thought I was lost. Sit down and I will tell you all about it."

He sat down, and Weston told his story. When it was finished, Hamlin got up and began walking about the room.

As the train which he intended to take to follow his wife left before business hours the next morning, and they wanted to see Murray, the lawyer who was defending Bagristus, they went to his house, and there they encountered a rebuff that annihilated all hopes.

The lawyer listened to their story with evident contempt and indignation, and at its conclusion bluntly told Weston that he considered him an impostor, and almost rudely refused to enter into any discussion of the matter.

As he accompanied them to the door he relaxed a little and spoke a few words to Hamlin; Weston he utterly ignored.

"You need have no concern as to Dr. Bagristus. He is not charged with murder; only with manslaughter, and they can't convict him of that. They have found no

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poison in the stomach, and they will not. He will be acquitted."

They went away, and for some time walked in silence, the same depressing thought in the minds of both. At length Weston gave utterance to it in a voice that was like a groan:

"It's no use, John! No one will believe that I am George Weston—not even Kate. For how can I prove my identity?"

"I am afraid it is so."

"I know it is," continued Weston bitterly, "I can see it all now. There are innumerable and unsurmountable obstacles, which must for ever separate me from Kate. I am a lost man!"

"Don't say that, George. We must think; we must plan; but first let us get back to my rooms."

Not another word was spoken until they reached his quarters; and then of a sudden Hamlin seemed to go crazy. He turned upon Weston and shook him until his hat fell off.

"What idiots! What are our heads good for, I wonder? The thing is so simple that it is strange we didn't think of it at first. You must marry Kate!"

"Marry Kate! What do you mean?"

"Just that exactly. You must marry her again, not now—not at once—but after a while—after a suitable time has elapsed."

"I don't see how that will help matters," said Weston.

"Why, it's all plain enough. You go away now, you disappear, in fact you haven't appeared much in your present state. You take a new name, let's see, your mother's name was Barnard; take that, George Barnard. In about a year George Barnard appears, gets acquainted with George Weston's widow, courts her, marries her, and lives happily ever after! What is the matter with that?"

"Why nothing, I suppose; but it is hardly satisfactory either. It is so long to wait, and I don't like the notion of Kate's being willing to marry another fellow. And then, I shall go dangling through life as her second husband, and step-father of my own children."

"But you can't get back on the old footing. That is gone by. You are legally dead—and you have no place among these living men, and you can't crowd in anywhere. You are out of the world, and the only way to get back is to marry into it. And you can even get your name back. It is not unusual for the groom to take the bride's name, and I think I shall insist on that, so that our firm can keep its old style."

"Oh, Kate, Kate!" groaned Weston, "how the time will drag!"

"Let it drag," said Hamlin, "so long as it keeps at it. I will keep you posted as to events. My hand shall be over Kate, and I will see that nothing interferes with our plans. In a short year you will be back, and then all our troubles will be

In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

Courage, my friend; let us face the inevitable. George Weston is dead. Long live George Weston!"

While they were at breakfast the next morning, Hamlin took up the newspaper, and when he had opened it, gave a yell.

"For Heaven's sake, what is this! Suicide of Dr. Iconax Bagristus! The murderer of George Weston committed suicide in his cell last evening!"

"I can't understand that."

Just then there was a knock at the door and a messenger gave him a letter from Murray.

DEAR SIR,

Since your call in the matter of Bagristus, an event has occured that leads me to think that I owe you an apology for my somewhat rude reception of your communication. Having occasion later yesterday evening to visit my client at the jail, I mentioned to him (for what reason I do not know) the statement which you had made. This threw him at once into a state of extraordinary excitement, the moving cause of which seemed to be his belief that he had at last (and, as I inferred, by accident), made the great discovery he had so long sought—the elixir of life. His mental exaltation was so great that I could transact no business with him, and so came away, leaving him in what I should term a state of ecstasy. I was therefore much surprised to hear that he had committed suicide. At once I repaired to the jail and inspected and identified the body. I remained there half-an-hour, and as the night was pleasant decided to walk home. I had proceeded as far as the Library, and was passing it, when a man who was walking quite fast, came behind me, and put his hand on my shoulder. I turned quickly and saw—Dr. Bagristus! I make this statement as a statement of a fact as it then appeared to me. He gave me a paper, spoke a few words in a hurried and incoherent manner, and then disappeared round the corner.

I went to a light and read the paper, which was as follows:

"HONOURED ADVOCATE,

"I will not abide the slow progress of the interminable law. The Great Secret is to me opened, and I am of all things the possessor. To elude the myrmidons of the prison was in the darkness easy. Of your high courtesy, accept my humble thanks for your great goodness.

"ICONAX BAGRISTUS, M.D., Ph.D."

I returned to the jail as quickly as possible. It had not been more than twenty minutes since I left it. I found the attendants still busied about the disposition of the body. I again inspected the body; I found that no strangers had been seen about the place, nor had anything unusual occurred. I then left the jail and went to my home. I have no explanation to make, nor opinion to give as to this affair. And as, on reflection, it seems to me that an apology is due to you, as before stated, the same is therefore tendered.

Yours truly,
THOMAS MURRAY.

The foregoing events occurred in the summer of 1893.

In the autumn of the next year, the following notice appeared in the papers:

MARRIED.—On the 10th inst., by the Rev. John Pontifex, at the bride's residence in Sparrow Street, George Barnard of Duluth, and Katherine, widow of the late George Weston, of this city.

GUY SOUTHWELL.

MR. ASKIN: "How did you get rid of that odious little fellow Bookwright, who talked shop?"

Miss Playfair: "I talked shopping."

JACK (who has popped): "It takes you a long time to decide."

Sallie: "I know. And I've about concluded to wear a demi-train of white chiffon over white silk, and have no bridesmaids."

MRS. YOUNGBRIDE: "How is it that you charge a penny a quart more than the other milkman?"

Waterpotts: "Madam, you must remember that all my milk is hand-milked. That, of course, makes the price a little higher."

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XLIX. (*continued*).

THERE was a general disposition to good-humoured riot throughout the camp that night, and the fiery colour-sergeant made little effort to check the spirits of his festive company. Jest ran high, and many an improvised song dealt, as Tommy loves to deal, with the delicate diplomatic position that lay before the two chief actors. One of them ended thus, to a catchy tune which was quickly taken up:

When I saw our William, damme,
He was blubbing for his mammy,
And he pined for German sausage and for stuerckraut in pails.
So says I unto the Kaiser:
"You may go away to-day, sir,
But you'd best look out to-morrow when you meet the Prince of Wales."

And there was indeed cause for both these distinguished personages to look to their conference on the morrow with some anxiety. If the Prince's mission was delicate, the Emperor's was still more so. True, he had not to meet the representative of England as a captive. That indignity was spared him. But Dr. Jameson's escapade had considerably embarrassed his situation. It was difficult to plead the equality of a commander surrounded by an unbeaten army.

It was not what could be said, but what neither would care to say, that formed the difficulty. The Prince of Wales could not hint that the Kaiser's cause was lost, and that the latter was suing as a defeated general. The Kaiser dared not confessed that terms of peace were only such as the British Government might insist on. Beneath the surface of courteous words there was bound to be a subtle war of hidden meaning. It was to be a contest of tact; and the Kaiser reflected not with overmuch equanimity, that tact was not a particularly striking element in his character.

An hour before noon on the next day, the Emperor set out with a small staff of officers to the memorable farm-house midway between Westhausen and Lauenburg. He had taken the precaution early in the day of laying bare his heart to Hohenlohe. The German Chancellor did not mince matters as he gave his earnest advice.

"Peace! Before all things, peace!" he exclaimed at the close of his remarks. "We must not forget, sire, that fencing is waste of force and fights against us, when the conclusion is obvious. It is better to accept with grace than irritate by useless argument. Your Majesty will use the occasion well, and miss no opening that the English Prince may give you; but I would humbly recommend that, if you fail to achieve what you propose, it is better to submit to the generosity of Great Britain than incur her anger."

The Kaiser had no retort to make, but thanked his counsellor submissively.

When he reached the rendezvous and entered the farm-house, past which he remembered so well riding but three nights before, he had time to collect his thoughts and to ruminate, somewhat mournfully, on the task before him.

He wished that the hours he had spent upon the elaboration of ornate proclamations, swollen with plethoric terms, had been bestowed upon acquiring the nice distinctions of subtle speech, for he had cause to fear the unassuming tongue of his opponent. It was rich in resource; it was strewn with unsuspected pitfalls and deceptive turns. Danger lurked in a compliment, and in concession there was guile. The Prince, beyond all men he had ever met, possessed the rare gift of tact. He lured his adversaries to their ruin. He had an innocence of phrase that was a snare unto the thoughtless, and in his honey there was gall.

And then the Kaiser reflected that the English language had an embarrassing wealth of terms; it boasted as many words as any three Continental tongues. Each one of these was an armed man waiting to do him battle. He was hopelessly outnumbered before he entered into the engagement.

Half-an-hour had elapsed when an orderly announced the arrival of the Prince of Wales. The young monarch rose to welcome his relative and foe.

All others retired.

The Emperor noticed that his visitor made him formal greeting and did not offer him his hand.

Colouring slightly, he opened the conference.

"Permit me, first, your Royal Highness," he said, "to thank the British Goverment for its generosity in giving me my liberty. It was a chivalrous action worthy of a generous foe."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince gravely. "It is for us to regret that you did not communicate your desire for an armistice to the Commander-in-Chief of our Second Army Corps. It would have prevented an unfortunate occurrence which I at least deeply regret."

"For that I do not care a jot!" exclaimed the Kaiser, with warmth. "I am ready at all times to accept the fortunes of war upon my own person."

"You misunderstand me," was the reply. "Much as I am concerned by that mishap, I was thinking of the preparations carried out at Southampton, which an early telegram would have delayed. Your message reached Her Majesty too late to prevent the embarkation and dispatch of a corps of over 150,000 additional troops, largely American, which I presume are now in the act of landing upon the quays of Hamburg!"

The Emperor started. Here was a new and unpleasant factor in the game. He had practically lost even his superiority of force.

"Let us forget such circumstances for a time," he begged. "Believe me, I have long commenced to regret my haste in co-operating in such an enterprise. The war is a terrible blunder. I feel it deeply. You will scarcely doubt my sincerity?"

"Not in the least, your Majesty," returned the Prince heartily, "not even if you were to insist that it dated as far back as the battle of Worthing."

This delicate thrust brought flames of colour to the Kaiser's cheeks.

"You are severe, sir," he said. "I embarked upon this war in error. I imagined it essential to the extension of the German Empire. I was wrong. My error I have seen most clearly, and it is surely not unnatural that I should hasten to confess it."

An orderly announced the arrival of the Prince of Wales.

"By no means," observed the Prince sententiously. "Time frequently works great changes in our opinions."

"Before matters have reached a climax," continued the Emperor, "whilst Germany still boasts her inexhaustible armies, whilst yet a decisive blow is lacking which should place either of us in an inferior position, I have begged that we may meet and seek some conclusion that may leave the honour of either of us untouched. Germany has nothing to gain by a continuance of this frightful struggle."

"So it would seem!" exclaimed the Prince sternly. "But *we* have."

"You?"

"Does it not strike you, your Majesty, that you have thundered at our gates a question? That question demands an answer. It can never be left to conjecture. You assailed us wantonly, without warning. You confess you had no reason for your swift assault. And now, driven back to your own dominions, you tell us you were wrong, and suggest that we should sheath our swords."

"In the interests of peace."

"You are a convincing advocate of peace, sir!" was the Prince's quick retort. "I fancy the argument was somewhat rudely opened!"

"And what do you gain by the continuance of war?"

"This is what we gain. A peremptory question demands a definite and final reply. You have asked whether the British Empire—I may now add, the Saxon race—can hope to withstand the shock of allied enmity. You have chosen a magnificent stage for the discussion of this delicate point. The whole world acts as audience. We cannot, we will not disappoint it. If no longer our policy of peace can secure the safety of mankind, we will at least make it certain that the savage vindication to which we have been driven shall be conclusive. These problems, clouded by the subtle rancour and secret conspiracies of European states, can no longer rest in dubiety. This war is the Final War. If we have to strike, it shall be a stroke to kill the very hope of a successor. We will not leave such doubts seething in the cauldron of international distrust and hatred. They will be resolved once for all, and no one shall again dare to raise them!"

The Emperor grew uneasy before the stern logic of the Prince.

"Whatever your purpose," he declared, "I maintain that Germany is the natural ally of England!"

"A natural ally!" exclaimed the Prince. "An alliance like that of conspirators, then, which must be sealed in blood! An alliance written on the plains of Stralsund, and scored upon the stones of Neuminster! Let us be frank your Majesty. I still await your proposals."

"I will make them clear," replied the Kaiser with hesitation, "if I have not already done so. We meet on equal terms. We both hate this infamous war of brethren. Let us gather in our forces and proclaim a peace. It is Germany's policy to seek the hand of England. Surely you can recognise in this meeting a desire that is not false? Do you fear our sincerity when our nation is still behind us?"

"We do not fear Germany, sir," declared the Prince proudly. "The German people are not with you. But who will be responsible for the vagaries of their statesmen?"

"Not their statesmen," hastily interrupted Wilhelm. "I take the blame upon myself."

"I cannot waste time in distinguishing between those of her advisers who are statesmen and those who are not!" was the rapid retort.

"Will not a peace suffice you?"

"By no means!"

"Then what do you demand?"

"We demand," said the Prince, "a complete settlement of the question which this war has raised."

"What question?" asked the Kaiser.

"Do you mean that you have forgotten it? Why, it is you who have suggested it. You have declared that it is necessary to decide whether England is to be supreme throughout the world! We have never propounded such a point. But as you demand it *shall* be determined, there is nothing left but to determine it."

"Why, sir," exclaimed the embarrassed sovereign, "you speak as a conqueror."

"Nay; that would be premature! I do not wish to be compelled to."

"Your argument is obvious. You contend that we have to settle whether England shall control the affairs of Europe. You are surely not serious. England is not a Continental power!"

"True," replied the Prince shortly, "it is a position we should have owed to you!"

"But do you insist on dominating the world!"

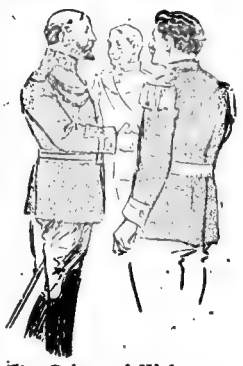
"You misunderstand me," said the Prince. "Let me again review the position. This challenge, thrown out at us we have accepted. You have forced us to take the settlement of European problems in our own hands, or to have our own position s ttled by you. There was no alternative. It is a tremendous task. We have not shrunk from it. These problems shall indeed be settled. There shall be no more questionings. When we have settled them we shall be content to withdraw, but only when we have made it impossible for any selfish power to raise them again. There is but one condition, therefore, of a treaty of peace. It is that you side with England in her task. You must accept her as an arbitrator and support her award. If you do not, it is clear we are still at war."

"And German interest——?"

"German interests, no less than the interests of France Russia, Austria, Turkey, and the remaining countries, are involved in the delicate problem we have to settle. You cannot be exempt. Whether you will gain, or whether you will lose, must necessarily depend upon the general justice of the policy you have pursued."

"But I should prefer to know more of the details of your scheme."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince coldly; "such details I cannot give, even if I would. We must consult America. She is our ally, and has armed herself. I understand that more than three millions of her people are waiting to be carried over to these shores to take their part in the grim preliminaries!"



The Prince of Wales . . . held out his hand.

The Emperor paused. He felt his position to be hopeless. Each step made it worse; and what he heard convinced him only the more of the madness of his act and the imperative call for immediate peace.

"Let me understand," he continued at last. "You say that you will withdraw when the guarantees for final peace satisfy you. What guarantee can you deem sufficient?"

"That," observed the Prince, "is no difficult matter. We shall demand immediate and complete disarmament."

"But," cried the Kaiser, "who can effect such a consummation?"

"We," was the laconic reply.

"But how, if you are not in arms?"

"It seems," said the Prince, "that England and America will necessarily remain in arms till the end is effected."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the amazed monarch. "Do you ask that we shall lay ourselves bare to an armed foe?"

"You do not trust us yet, it appears," was the Prince's response. "Trust is the prime condition of peace. I regret I have no other terms to offer."

For many long minutes the Kaiser remained wrapped in thought, torn by a thousand cruel perplexities. Yet he could see no issue to them any way. The insuperable power of the British race confronted him. It was hopeless longer to dream of a happy encounter.

And after all could not Britain be trusted? Her history stood behind her: She had ever been the advocate of peace, the champion of liberty. A free, emancipated Europe! It was a strange and inspiring thought! A new era of hope of industry, of progress.

Beyond all came the ominous words of the Chancellor to his mind.

"Peace! Before all things, peace!"

Aye, and not only that. This far-seeing statesman—what had he said as his last exhortation?

"It is better to submit to the generosity of Great Britain than incur her anger."

England was now firm set on her purpose. She must advance to its attainment or be hurled back, crushed. And who could take up this giant's task? Germany? Impossible. But this was not all. Behind England was America. It was the whole race—the race that pervaded the world, that gave to the earth its history and to the sea its speech. Here was a power strong as that of destiny. Not all that remained of mankind could keep back this irresistible people.

Her purpose, too—not one of empire, of ravage, of possession; rather a holy and religious purpose that had for aim the union of the world in one eternal bond of peace. It was the dream of philosophy, the message of science, the yearning of art. In its beneficent light the earth would bloom into new beauty. It was a mission that no brute force or savage hate could stay on its triumphant course.

Such thoughts coursed through the Kaiser's mind. And then, rising suddenly, he exclaimed:

"Prince, I accept your terms. I swear to assist your purpose. Germany shall submit to your award. Henceforth we shall be allies and not foes!"

The Prince of Wales sprang up in eagerness from his chair and held out his hand.

"You have spoken nobly, nephew," he said. "Your trust in us shall not be shaken. Your words have not only saved the fate of Germany: they have saved the fate of the world!"

And in solemn silence, each moved by deep emotion, these two representatives of the great Teutonic nations clasped hands in token of their sacred compact.

CHAPTER L.

How the Parisians Danced.

"We will dance behind our fortifications," wrote the *Gil Blas*. As a mere trope, an idle metaphor, the phrase would serve, but as a description of actual fact it was far from being justified by events.

Paris was not in the least degree jubilant. Although the military spirit of the people was stirred by the sheer necessities of the moment, there were glimpses of rational judgment which showed to thoughtful observers that gay, Lutetia would be herself again when the war had ended and not until then.

The Ministry, in reality tottering to its base, was ostensibly propped up by public opinion.

Now, in an earnest, self-sacrificing, devoted Paris, this would have been impossible. The fierce energy of the citizens would demand rapid success, or equally rapid change. But here a more cynical mood betrayed itself. "These clever fellows got us into this mess," said the city in effect, "let them get us out of it again. They must have every chance of convincing both us and the English that they were not mistaken in bringing about this disastrous war."

This wholly unexpected attitude on the part of the fickle Parisian mob did not reassure the President and M. Hanotaux.

"During the Commune," murmured the head of the State, "a man was in power one week and forgotten the next." And he sighed with the reflection that the last state of that man was better than the first.

"My dear colleague," replied with a smile the fire-eating scientist whose advent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had proved so epoch-making; "Fate is often feline. We are being played with before the moment of immolation."

If the chiefs of the Republic secretly expressed such opinions, who shall describe the loud-mouthed fury of that large class of Parisians whose entire fortunes depended on the gratification of the expensive tastes cultivated by English milords and American honourables and their wives and daughters.

A tremulous wine-merchant . . . . addressed a crowd of customers.

Where was now the Paris hat, where the *gants de suède*? Of what avail were the gowns of Paquin, the dinners of Durand? The hotels and emporia of fashion closed, the large restaurants empty, the Casino mute—the capital of the world *où l'on s'amuse* was indeed desolated.

When a party of wealthy shopkeepers dined at Durand's both proprietor and guests ground their teeth in silent rage as they read the label on the bottle of superior champagne: "The same as supplied to England."

Alas, England was drinking beer, and English ladies

were wearing goods manufactured in Bradford or Manchester.

The first outbreak of real patriotic feeling sprang tumultuously into existence when the news came that Russia had crumbled into fragments, and that the German Emperor had yielded.

So France was again left to fight on unaided to the bitter close. Why was it always France that must pour forth her blood and her treasure to advance a cause or bolster a theory? Did mankind need teaching the tenets of liberty—France must wade through accumulated horrors to provide the rest of the human race with an object lesson. Did the world require some magnificent demonstration of the art of empire—France again must give her sons and her millions to scrawl the thesis across the face of Europe. And when England, the all-pervading power, grew so arrogant that the rest of the nations panted for elbow-room, the final outcome was that France should be down-trodden to give other malcontents breathing-space.

For a time it seemed that Paris would be true to her traditions, and hold each street as a barricade, and each house as a fort.

But the fever died as quickly as it arose, and by common consent the blame of the situation was placed on the shoulders of the authorities.

Of course politics ran high in the cafés, and the duties of patriotism were proclaimed in flamboyant terms.

"Citizens and brothers," a tremulous wine merchant cried from the celebrated Boulevard Haussmann, as he addressed a crowd of customers, "Paris must be true to her traditions. We must give our last sou, spend our last drop of blood, in defence of these stones hallowed by the footsteps of the pioneers of liberty, equality, and fraternity."

Yet, at a late hour that night, he and his wife hid all their jewellery and the greater part of their money beneath a flagstone which supported the kitchen boiler.

For the truth about the sortie was now leaking out, and even the vainglorious survivors found it necessary to depict the courage of the English in lurid language, if only to enhance the prodigies of valour they had themselves performed. Who should stay such Paladins as the foe?

The President and M. Hanotaux conferred together very seriously when the German Ambassador communicated to them the result of the conversation between the Emperor and the Prince of Wales.

"Are we to expect then," M. Hanotaux said in freezing tones, "that our quondam ally is about to become an active enemy on the eastern frontier, in obedience to this newfound gospel of peace and brotherly love?"

"No, sir," was the dignified reply. "It is no part of His Majesty's programme to turn traitor. His desires were prosecuted in the interests of the German people, but he expressly stipulated that he should be exempted from further co-operation in the war save in the guise of a mediator."

"France has received little help from German arms in this quarrel," was the contemptuous retort. "She wishes none from her diplomacy."

"Will you not follow the example of Germany?" said the Ambassador.

"Never," cried the Frenchmen, speaking together.

The Ambassador then withdrew.

For a little while neither spoke. At last the President said: "My dear colleague, what is to be the end?"

"We must triumph." The words were brave, but the tone was not that of assurance.

"But if we do not? I tell you candidly I fear the worst. Investment of Paris is impossible! I cannot see how any point of the lines is to be forced; yet I tremble. The unbroken successes of the invaders, their indomitable spirit, their carelessness of consequence—above all, the quiet confidence with which Lord Roberts is moving his forces on the west, perplex and sadden me. What if Paris be carried by a *coup de main*?"

"There is always a pistol," was the moody response.

"*Pouf!* You are distracted to make such an answer. I am not speaking of myself, or of you, but of France. What can be done for France?"

"All that is possible. Secure the best terms, and then, for ourselves, *bon jour!*"

Changed, indeed, was the tone of the stout-hearted minister since that council at Versailles in May!

Trains travelling east were crowded.

General Saussier, as became a brave soldier, was more hopeful.

He had 500,000 men under his command, not counting the Garde de Paris and the citizen battalions now doing duty within the walls.

His defences were justly deemed impregnable. His communications south and east of the capital were unimpaired, and he had satisfactorily arranged for a strong corps from Chalons to throw itself in the path of Sir Redvers Buller. He counted upon the English hurling themselves vainly against the circle of forts, while France was collecting her yet magnificent energies for a final effort to crush the persistent foe.

A man of colossal bulk, and unwieldy withal, the French Commander-in-Chief bore charger after charger to the earth whilst he cantered from camp to camp and from battery to battery. When too physically exhausted himself to remain in the saddle he was driven in a landau on his tour of inspection, and he certainly succeeded in impressing officers and men alike with belief in his sagacity and respect for his unflagging energy.

His plans were well laid so far as the tactical distribution of his troops went. Under the most favourable conditions his great opponent must require some hours to move any material section of his army, and in the same time, by keeping strict watch upon the British, General Saussier could bring to bear against them a vastly superior force.

These considerations, backed by the 2,000 splendid cannon that peered through the embrasures of the fortifications, were potent reasons for the hopefulness of the French military chief.

He looked solely at facts. The President and M. Hanotaux thought of principles.

Had he been present at certain midnight drills taking place nightly within the British lines, General Saussier might not have felt so confident.

That the public did not share his views was shown by the actions of many besides the keeper of the *estaminet* in the Boulevard Haussmann. The real reasons were never avowed, but it was surprising to note the numbers of women and children whom their male protectors thought to be suffering from the ill effects of a hot September.

Trains travelling east were crowded with healthy-looking invalids, all of whom had suddenly discovered the marvellous salubrious qualities of the Vosges mountains.

There was disturbance even within the sacred circle of the arts.

So it came to pass that one night, when the peaceful calm of the Tuileries garden was only accentuated by the distant rumbling of commissariat waggons crossing the Pont de la Concorde, a small group of men were busily occupied in digging deeply beneath the trees in a secluded spot.

Long they laboured, and when the trench was ample enough they solemnly interred two heavy packages, securely bound in waterproof cloths, and so cumbrous that they required the united strength of many hands to lower them with ropes into the grave-like receptacle prepared for them.

The diggers were men whose names are famous through-

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out the world, and they were rescuing the Venus de Milo from the dangers that threatened her.

Once before, so goes the legend, has the beautiful Aphrodite descended from her throne in the Louvre and sought obscure safety at the hands of her worshippers. When Prussian shells began to rain on Paris from Chatillon the majestic statue was carefully stowed away in a secret resting-place until siege and occupation were ended.

The painter, musician, and the man of letters foregathered to growl at everything and everybody.

And now the scene was re-enacted—not without due cause. If you doubt the earnestness of these devotees at the shrine of Venus, you should read the inscription on the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum.

When Napoleon took the bronze horses from St. Mark's, in Venice, he was compelled by treaty to restore them. England never gives back that which she has once grasped, and Aphrodite must never gaze with calm self-sufficiency at Phœbus Appollo. So she was hidden for a space beneath the trees of the Tuileries.

Art in the Quartier Latin was not so serious.

Here the painter, the musician, and the man of letters foregathered to growl at everything and everybody. Paris might be hypnotised by the dread of impending evil, but not so the children of Bohemia.

They had found, to their great joy, that at least one proprietor of a restaurant so bubbled over with patriotic ardour that an epigram at the expense of the British meant a free dinner, and a rousing speech, *à la patrie*, sufficed for unquestioned additions to an already surfeited slate.

Thus did Paris fret and fume, and stir uneasily as though in slumber disturbed by fearful dreams, whilst a few miles away on the west the might of Britain assembled in dread and portentous array.

And there was no dancing—not even at the Bal Bullier or the Moulin Rouge.

(To be continued.)

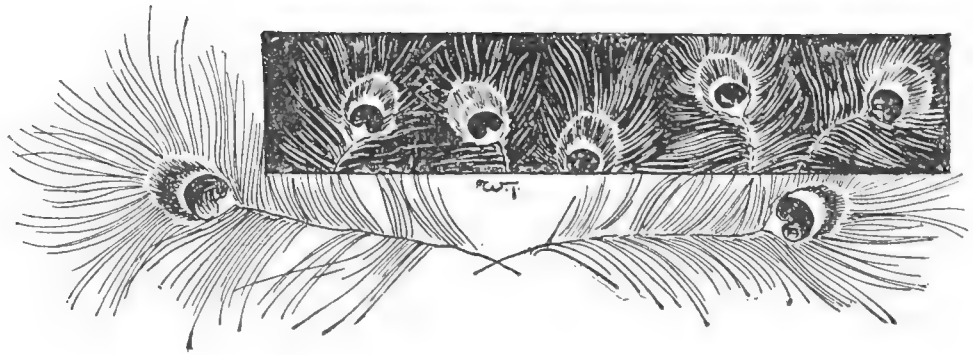
Result of Distribution No. 14.

Two applicants have this week received a sovereign each. They are:

Mrs. E. BURRESS, 19 Jeyes Road, New Brompton.
J. MORETON, Lugwardine, Hereford.

Those who did not apply are:

Mrs. Adams, Penhenver, Hoefield Terrace, Plymouth; George Bone, Brea Vean, Just-in-Penrith, Cornwall; R. Campbell, 8 Westgate, Gainsborough; Miss Dorsey, 44 Margaret Street, Hull; A. G. Edwards, Post Office, Prickwillow, Cambs.; S. F. Francis, West Street, Cromer; Jas. Garrod, 14 Clarkson Street, Ipswich; John Hendry, Cathedral Street, Dunkeld; J. G. Johnston, Victoria Street, Stromness; Mrs. Keith, Ashfield House, Rothesay; W. Lawlor, 86 O'Connell Street, Dungarvon; Jas. M'Mullen, 62 Linen Hall, Ballymena; H. Nurse, 5 Bath Terrace, Russell Street, Reading; J. T. Page, Victoria Road, Fenny-Stratford; C. G. Oppermann, 60 Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames; F. Rashleigh, 8 Guadaloupe Terrace, Sandown, Isle of Wight; Geo. T. League, West Street, Havant; T. S. Wakefield, Hall Farm, Packwood, Warwickshire; R. Young, 30 Downing Street, Farnham, Surrey; F. Vivian, Marshfield, Monmouthshire; W. Arnold, Penarthur, St. David's; M. Quinn, 18 Elmswood Road, Egremont; A. Batson, 10A Liverpool Road, Luton; H. Copley, Crown Street, S. Ives; W. T. Dunkley, 22 Kettering Road, Rothwell; Geo. Eayres, Chapel Street, Holbeach, Lincs.; G. Foster, 1 Royal Cres Villa, Canterbury Road, Margate; Mrs. Godley, 63 Hampton Road, Stockton-on-Tees; John Hall, 28 Dotwick Street, North Shields; G. ohnston, Boundary Road, Carlisle; Geo. Kelly, 53 Boroughgate, Appleby; Jas. Loader, 125 North Road, St. Helens, Lancs.; R. Mear, 86 High Street, Longton, Staffs.; Jas. Neale, 77 Chester Road, Kidderminster; E. Oakley, 13 Hamer Place, Derby; Jos. Pratt, 3 Stratford Square, Nottingham; John Reid, Lodge Farm, Donington, Leicester; Mrs. E. Stevenson, Gilmorton, Lutterworth; Mrs. Munday, 163, Walton Street, St. Thomas's, Oxford; W. T. M. Wallet, 1 Crescent, Minories, E.C.; H. Dolling, 57 Lower Clapton Road, N.E.; J. M. Hodgekins, 6 Leighton Mansions, Queen's Club Gardens, West Kensington; Miss M. Oades, 26 Summers Town, Lower Tooting, S.W; H. Howe, 3 Iverson Road, Brondesbury, N.W.; J. D. Lister, 105 Noel Street, Nottingham; Miss B. G. Jeffrey, 4 Albert Terrace, Salisbury; H. Owen, 32 High Street, Wimbledon; C. Santer, The Bridge, Corbrook, Kent.



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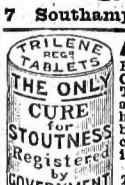

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SHORT TRUTHS.

T. M.—Arctic explorers state that the natives of the regions of snow and ice never attempt to assuage thirst by putting snow into their mouths. If snow is melted, it becomes drinkable water, and relieves thirst as ordinary water does; but if it is allowed to melt in the mouth, it increases the thirst.

V. S.—There are now 58 prisons in England; less than fifty years ago there were 113, so that the number has decreased by practically one-half, despite the increase in population.

W. H. has been puzzled, when reading about Egyptian finance in the newspapers, by the signs £T and £E before the figures; thus, £T200,000. He would like to know what these mean.———They signify that the money is stated in Turkish or Egyptian pounds. The Turkish pound is worth a little more than 18s. of our money, and the Egyptian pound is equal to £1 0s. 3d. These values vary somewhat, according to the rate of exchange.

F.—The largest fire insurance policy in existence is that covering the property of the Santa Fé Railway Company. The amount of the insurance is £1,000,000, and the annual premium is £30,000.

WET.—Some time ago a company was formed in America to loan umbrellas. Subscribers paid a small annual fee, as receipt for which they received a metal ticket. Shops or depôts were opened in various streets, and when a subscriber was caught in a downpour, he only had to call at the depôt and leave his ticket in order to procure a gamp. That was what the company thought, but it usually happened that when the over-confident subscriber was caught in a heavy shower, the nearest call-room was several streets away; as he would have got drenched in reaching the place, he had to do the same as other people, and take shelter in a doorway. So the scheme fell through.

B.—The wholesale prices realised by foreign butters form the best indication of the value set upon them by consumers in this country. The highest prices are obtained by the Danish, Swedish, and Dutch varieties; the prices fluctuating between 105s. to 120s. per cwt.

H. G.—The Swedes pay great attention to the replanting of trees, to compensate for the continual demand upon the timber of their country. Every year the school children plant about 500,000 trees, under the guidance of their teachers. They do not all grow; but those that take root are sufficient to prevent undue denudation of the forests.

R. E. asks: "Is it known how many white elephants have been captured?"———There is no authentic record in black and white; but a celebrated elephant hunter has stated that since the beginning of the Christian era only twenty-four of these animals have been caught.

WILL.—The last will and testament of Shakespeare is kept at Somerset House. It is fixed in a series of frames protected by glass.

J. M.—Athmos, a mountain in Roumelia, is called the Monte Santo, or Holy Mountain, owing to the number of monasteries and hermitages erected upon it. These buildings contain numerous manuscripts of the New Testament that are of great antiquity.

F. L. B. asks: "At what age should a man give up football?"———Some say that a man should not play after the age of thirty; but it is a matter in which everybody has a right to please himself. However, it is courting disaster to play at an age when a breakage may mean a permanent injury.

C. N.—Undoubtedly a large percentage of the crime committed in this country goes unpunished. It is computed that in 55 cases out of 100 the criminals escape the reward of their misdeeds. There are about 40,000 persons under the suspicion of the police—persons known to be thieves, receivers, or otherwise out of the pale of honest society, but there is no evidence that will enable the police to arrest them.

KISS. — Certainly, kissing may be dangerous at times, as when a person is suffering from a throat complaint; but in such cases the common sense of the parties in question should recognise that the osculatory greeting should be abandoned. In Servia they have a custom of kissing deceased friends before burial, and so strongly is the custom rooted in the popular feeling that the common sense of the inhabitants is useless against it. Some years ago there was a serious epidemic of diphtheria due to it, and the authorities had to issue a stringent prohibition. But the regulation evoked such hostility that it was found necessary to limit it to cases of persons who had died from diphtheria. Even the severe lesson of the epidemic did not teach the people to drop the practice in connection with other diseases.

G.—It has been estimated that if the pictures in the National Gallery were sold, they would fetch a million and a half sterling. But they would most probably realise a larger sum, as American and other millionaires would eagerly compete for the possession of certain pictures, which cannot be equalled.

D. K. R. asks: "How can worry kill a man?"———Worry injures beyond repair certain cells of the brain, and the brain being the nutritive centre of the body, the other organs become gradually injured, or a combination of them arises, and death finally ensues.

F. A.—It has been computed that, on the average, an engine-driver travels 20,000 miles a year.

BEGINNER writes: "What would you say was the most common form of accident a cyclist is likely to meet with, and should therefore endeavour to guard against?"———That which is commonly known as "skidding"—the sudden slipping of the tyres along the road—throwing the rider violently on the ground with as much precipitation as when one's feet slip on an ice-slide. It is also one of the most dangerous, for it is impossible to save oneself on such an occasion. You are over before you know where you are. Especially is it dangerous where the traffic is great, for it is more than likely that the rider will be thrown right under the feet of horses and the wheels of passing vehicles. There is a fortune awaiting the inventor who can find means to lessen this danger.

C. P.—The original cost of St. Paul's Cathedral was a million and a half sterling.

S. L.—There is more money made out of the "rag business," as you style it, than you suppose. A ton of old rags is worth something like £10 to a dealer, who pays, perhaps, one-third that sum for it.

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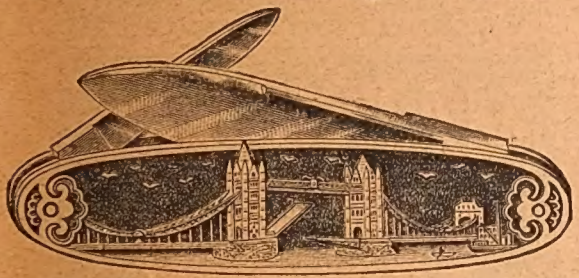

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—ABRAM LYLE & SONS Ltd
MAKERS OF LYLE'S GOLDEN SYRUP

"KKOVAH"
JELLIES
Real Fruit Flavored!
A FREE TRIAL
SEND US BY P.C. YOUR GROCER'S NAME & ADDRESS MENTIONING THIS PAPER & WE WILL FORWARD *FREE & POST PAID* SUFFICIENT TO MAKE ½ PINT.
SUTCLIFFE & BINGHAM, KKOVAH WORKS MANCHESTER

"LOUIS"
VELVETEEN

See that the name spelt L.O.U.I.S is stamped on every Yard.

LOUIS XI KING OF FRANCE 1461-1483.

"MATCHLESS"

"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.
"SIMPLE TEST."
Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with verdigris.
"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green, and is therefore free from acid.

FREE FROM ACID POISON OR GRIT.

LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD

METAL POLISH.
PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS, LIVERPOOL

ASK FOR & INSIST ON HAVING
HARRIS'
DELICIOUS & ABSOLUTELY PURE
MADE ONLY BY HARRIS AND Co
GOLD MEDAL
OF STORES & GROCERS EVERYWHERE
BERMONDSEY CAKE FACTORY, LONDON, W.
CAKES
APPLICATIONS FOR SOLE AGENCIES INVITED

IT IS NOT
Reckitt's
PARIS BLUE
UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.